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PETER MUFFET ON PROVERBS;

JOHN COTTON ON ECCLESIASTES,

AND ON THE CANTICLES; OR, SONG OF SOLOMON.

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*Proverbs Book of*

# A COMMENTARY

ON THE

# WHOLE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

BY

PETER MUFFET.

1811

EDINBURGH: JAMES NICHOL.

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M.DCCC.LXVIII.

[WE have not been able to obtain any information regarding the author of this exceedingly rare Commentary. He was an old man in 1594, when the second edition of it was published. He must, therefore, have been one of the Elizabethan divines. His name does not appear either in the *Athenæ* or *Fasti Oxonienses*, or in the *Athenæ Cantabrigienses*, in Tanner's *Bibliotheca*, or in Fuller's *Church History*. His "Commentary on the Proverbs" appears to have been his only published work. It will be found to be sound and judicious, and well worthy of a place in this series.—Ed.]

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD,

THE LORD EDWARD, EARL OF BEDFORD,

GRACE AND PEACE BE MULTIPLIED.

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THE former edition of my Commentary upon the Proverbs of Solomon, Right Honourable Earl, was not only by your honour favourably received, but by divers godly Christians right well accepted. Nevertheless, it seemed unto some of my friends to be somewhat too brief. The former impression being sold, they desired me to think upon a second edition, and therein to handle matters somewhat more amply. Wherefore, according to their desire, although mine encumbrances and infirmities have been of late exceeding many and great, yet have I the second time travailed with my work again, and now published a larger and fuller exposition than that was which went before; yea, and added a table and another short treatise to the former. If yet either in regard of largeness or plainness of writing (which I see to be a thing necessary, and which I more respect than before I have done) I shall scant satisfy all, I would pray them to impute it to my

want of leisure, the true and only hindrance thereof. If there be escapes in the words or in the points and distinctions of any sentences, this could not by me be remedied, by reason of mine absence from the press. If any hereafter of those who best can do it shall set forth some perfect exposition upon the holy Proverbs, (which to do is a work of infinite labour,) it shall be the gain of the church, and the thing that I desire. In the mean season, Most Honourable Earl, I dedicate once again this my Commentary unto your Honour, desiring you with wonted favour to receive it, and to bend your eyes to look into it. Hoping that you will so do, and wishing all prosperity, as unto yourself, so to all of your most noble stock, whereunto I am deeply bound, I reverently commend your honour to Almighty God.

Your Honour's at commandment,

P. M.



# A COMMENTARY

UPON THE

## BOOK OF THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

### CHAPTER. I.

VER. 1. *The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel.*

Two things are contained in this first verse: the one, the matter of this whole book, in this word *proverbs*; the other, the author thereof, in these titles *of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel*. Proverbs are certain general, short, and pithy sayings, used, or to be used, in every man's mouth. Albeit sundry parables are set down in the writings of the prophets, the evangelists, and the apostles; yet this book only of the Scripture is entitled by the name of Proverbs, because in it alone proverbial sentences are continued without ceasing or intermission, and without mingling of stories or prayers, or other matters therewithal. For in this little volume a great heap of grave and most prudent sayings is so nearly couched and so briefly comprised, as that proverbs, like drifts of snow, seem to lie thick together, and, like grapes of the same bunch, to cluster one upon another. As concerning the methods of this book, neither are the proverbs thereof so confusedly shuffled, but that some of them, now and then, have affinity and coherence together; nor yet so suitably sorted, but that even those oftentimes which are placed as neighbours very nearly, differ far in matter asunder, and have no dependence

upon one another. But, letting pass the order of these divine parables, we are rather to consider the author or utterer thereof, who is affirmed to have been Solomon. Solomon, in the Hebrew language, doth signify peaceable, which name even the Lord himself did give unto the author of this book, 1 Chron. xxii. 9, because in his days, after long wars, he purposed to grant such peace unto the Israelites as that they might safely and securely sit under their vines and under their fig-trees. Now as the very name of Solomon, which signifieth peace, is sweet, so his stock was honourable, seeing he was a flourishing branch or bud, as it were, of David, whose son he is affirmed to have been. It is the manner of the Hebrew writers, when they mention any person, for distinction's sake to set down not only his own proper name, but his father's. But whereas Solomon here is called David's son, it seemeth to me that his father's name is expressed, not only for distinction, but for honour's sake. Nevertheless, whereas David had divers children, this title of being his son was no such special or singular prerogative, but that it did agree in common as well to Absalom, or Adonijah, or the other sons of David, as to Solomon. Wherefore, to the end that Solomon might be known from all other by the garland upon his head, and declared to be more honourable than his brethren by his sceptre in his hand, he is shewed

to have been king of Israel—of Israel I say, the chosen people of God, among whom only in those days was the visible church.

Ver. 2. *To know wisdom and instruction, and to understand the words of prudence.*

In this second verse two ends or uses of the parables of this book are noted unto us. The former end is the knowing of wisdom and instruction. Wisdom is an effectual knowledge of things which are to be believed or practised, wrought by the light of God's word and Spirit clearing and directing the mind and understanding. As concerning instruction, it is a virtue consisting in the right using of wisdom, whereby, through the Lord's working and schooling, the heart and life of men is reformed. The second use of these parables is to understand the words of prudence, (or skilful speeches.) These words of prudence are those holy doctrines or divine instructions whereby a man may reform that which is amiss in him, and govern himself aright in the whole course of his life. For wherewithal shall a young man, yea, any man, redress his way, but by ruling himself after the word of God, every sentence whereof is, as it were, a straight line leading to repentance, but especially the sentences of this excellent book?

Ver. 3. *To receive the instruction of understanding, of justice, of judgment, and of all equity, (or righteousness.)*

Herein divers parcels of instruction, mentioned in the former verse, are specified. First, These parables serve unto the renewing and lightening of the mind, which here is meant by understanding. Secondly, They teach justice, whereby is given to every one that which is his due. Thirdly, They teach also judgment, whereby the straight rule of God's word and his exact law is in every point and action observed. Finally, They teach all equity, whereby 'whatsoever things are true, whatsoever comely, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever acceptable, whatsoever of good report, of any praise or any virtue, are thought on, practised, and followed after,' Phil. iv. 8.

Ver. 4. *To give unto the simple sharpness of wit, (or wariness,) and to the child knowledge and discretion, (or wittiness.)*

That wisdom which was spoken of him in the second verse, is now in this divided into certain

branches, as, namely, into sharpness of wit, knowledge, and discretion. The simple, by whom they are understood who are rude and heedless in their dealing, shall by the parables of this book attain unto sharpness of wit or wariness,—that is to say, not only a quick conceit, or good capacity, but a forecast in foreseeing of dangers, and preventing of harms. For these proverbs have the nature and effect of the whole word of God, whereof they are a part, which, as the prophet David affirmeth, giveth wisdom unto the simple. Again, that child, or childish person, who wanteth experience or staidness, or who is a novice, as it were, in understanding, shall by learning the divine sentences written in this book, not only come unto knowledge, or a perceiving of truth and error, but unto discretion, or soundness in judgment, and staidness in affection. For as the fountain of the whole word of God maketh those that are exercised therein, Ps. cxix. 99, more learned than their teachers, and more prudent than their elders; so these sacred proverbs, as rivers flowing therefrom, have the same sovereign virtue, and work the self-same wholesome effect.

Ver. 5. *A wise man shall hear, and increase in learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.*

Herein is further declared that the sentences of this book will be profitable, not only to the unlearned, but to the learned. The wise man, or he who already hath some good knowledge in spiritual and holy things, shall by the help of these parables see into divine mysteries more fully than ever he did. Again, a man of understanding, or a profound clerk, who is singularly well seen in the Scriptures, shall by these proverbs be more furnished than ever he was with skill and cunning.

Ver. 6. *To teach (or to understand) a parable and an eloquent speech; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.*

Solomon now declareth herein what he meaneth by the words of prudence mentioned in the second verse of this chapter, for they are by him divided into four kinds: first, A parable, or a common proverb; secondly, An eloquent speech, or a fine description of a matter; thirdly, The words of the wise, or choice terms full of art and learning; last

of all, Their dark sayings, or hard and obscure riddles, which shadow or cover some secret meaning. The prophet Habakkuk, chap. ii. 6, describing in his prophecy the insatiable covetousness of the Babylonians, who had preyed upon all the nations of the world, doth threaten those greedy cormorants, that the people whom they had devoured should take up against them a parable, an eloquent speech, and dark sayings: by which place of Scripture it appeareth that three of these words do differ one from the other, albeit not simply, yet at the least in some respect. Now besides these three sorts of choice and picked sentences, this our author in the book of the preacher, Eccles. xii. 11, maketh mention of the words of the wise, which he affirmeth to be as goads, and as nails that are fastened. Whereby it is further manifest, that even those four terms, to wit, a parable, an eloquent speech, the words of the wise and their dark sayings, are to be distinguished the one from the other. But howsoever it is, (not to stand too curiously on the scanning of the difference of words,) it is evident that the fruit of this book will be exceeding great, seeing the diligent reader or hearer thereof shall thereby be enabled to pierce into the meaning of most excellent instructions, which are able to build up a man in faith and obedience.

Ver. 7. *The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge: (but) wisdom and instruction fools despise.*

Solomon having declared the use of this book, sheweth now the sum or chief point of the matter therein contained, and laboureth to stir up every one to hearken diligently to the particular precepts thereof. The word of God, which teacheth and engendereth a reverent awe of the Lord, is here (as elsewhere in the Scripture, Ps. xix. 9) called the fear of God. It is said to be the beginning of knowledge, because no art or doctrine, saving this only, can bring a man to eternal life. For this cause Moses speaketh thus to the children of Israel in the book of Deuteronomy, chap. iv. 6, 'You shall keep and do these statutes; for this is your wisdom and your prudence, before the eyes of the people, who hearing all these statutes will say, only this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' Nevertheless, howsoever indeed the doctrine of God's word is the flower of all knowledge which is in the

world: 'yet (as is added in the latter part of this verse) wisdom and instruction fools despise;' for they neglect and refuse wise counsel given them concerning the choosing of that which is good, and reject all warning whereby they are admonished to shun that which is evil.

Ver. 8. *My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake thou not the doctrine of thy mother.*

Ver. 9. *For they shall be a comely ornament unto thine head, and a chain unto thy neck.*

After that Solomon hath declared what is the chief point of knowledge, he cometh now to exhort children to obey and regard the admonitions of their parents, whereby they may most readily attain unto true wisdom. He most lovingly calleth every one to whom he speaketh his son, to shew that with a fatherly affection he desireth and seeketh the salvation of all. Furthermore, saith he, hear the instruction of thy father; as if he should have said, Inasmuch as instruction is the means whereby wisdom is attained, for none is born wise, children are before all things to hearken unto counsel, but especially to the advice of their parents, as those who most naturally tender, and most heartily wish, their welfare and well-doing. But it is the part of children, not only to hearken to the advice of their fathers and mothers, but not to forsake the same, either for the seducing of sinners, or for any other cause whatsoever. For if that which is planted by the father or mother be rooted out by Satan or his instruments, or if that which is received by hearing is not retained in a good conscience, or a constant heart, unto the end, all is to no purpose. Now, to the end that children may be brought to regard and keep their parents' admonitions, Solomon in the next verse declareth the fruit which they shall reap by their obedience. 'For,' saith he, 'they shall be a comely ornament unto thine head, and a chain unto thy neck'—that is to say, as jewels and gay apparel greatly adorn and set out those that therewith are arrayed and decked, so thy parents' instructions, by thee obeyed, shall grace and beautify thine heart and life in such sort as that thou shalt seem amiable both unto God and man. For by the outward ornaments of comely attire, and of a chain, long life, a good name, honour, wealth, the favour of good men, and of God himself, yea, eternal glory

and happiness, are shadowed out, whereunto obedient children attain, partly in this world, partly in the world to come.

Ver. 10. *My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*

As parents are to be heard, so seducers are to be avoided, by whom great danger ariseth, especially to those that are young, who are not only void of experience, but naturally prone unto evil; for such as go about to seduce are wont to draw youth from those good things which they have been taught at home. Wherefore, after that children have been exhorted in the former verses to honour their parents, they are now very fitly dissuaded from following of evil company and wicked counsel. Indeed all men are transgressors of the laws of almighty God; but by the name of sinners in this place, notorious offenders, as, for example, thieves and robbers, are understood. If then, saith the wise king, either any in general, that are set on mischief, or such in particular, as use to lie in wait for a purse by the highways, entice or allure thee by flattering speeches or fair promises, consent thou not; yield not to their temptations, but resist them. There is no admonition more needful for youth than this, yea, it is very necessary even for those children who are best disposed, unto whom oftentimes it falleth out that albeit they have been well brought up by their parents from the cradle, or are well inclined of their own natural disposition, yet, if at any time they light into the company or acquaintance of lewd persons, they are led aside to do that which is evil, and to commit all manner of wickedness. Many a good man's son hath been cast away at this rock, for the which cause it is the more carefully to be shunned, especially when the Spirit of God, by the pen of the wisest instructor that ever wrote, giveth warning thereof.

Ver. 11. *If they shall say, Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us freely hide ourselves against the innocent:*

Ver. 12. *We shall swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as they that go down into the pit:*

Ver. 13. *We shall find all precious substance, (and) fill our houses with spoils.*

Ver. 14. *Thou shalt cast thy lot amongst us; there shall be one purse amongst us all.*

Ver. 15. *My son, walk not in the same way with them; draw back thy foot from their path.*

Solomon, in the person of a careful father, counselleth the young man herein to take heed of being seduced by the enticing speeches and allurements of those who make no conscience to steal or rob by the highway. To this end he first bringeth in these thieves or robbers, making, as it were, an oration to the simple young man; secondly, In the last of these verses, he exhorteth him, though he hear their words, not to follow their deeds, not to enter into their company: 'If they shall say, Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us freely hide ourselves against the innocent: we shall swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole, as they that go down into the pit,' &c. In these verses the robbers, presenting the objection of danger which the young man might make, declare unto him the course which they mean to take in spoiling travellers of their goods and lives. They tell him, first of all, that they will not openly murder the passenger, but lurk in some bush or corner for such an intent, so that, carrying the matter closely, they shall never be called into question. Thus, by breeding in him hope of lying hid or escaping punishment, they go about to draw him into their league, and to make him one of their devilish fraternity. Secondly, They shew how sure they are to meet with the prey, affirming that inasmuch as they are many and mighty, they will undoubtedly take the passengers and hold them fast enough for making hue and cry after them; for they compare themselves to the grave and pit, which consume and enclose those persons or things which are put or fall thereinto. Wherefore the thieves very arrogantly boast that they will bind and spoil those that travel by the highway, swallowing them, though they be not dead but alive, and devouring them, albeit they neither are wounded nor lame, but sound of their limbs: 'We shall get all precious substance; we shall fill our houses with spoils: thou shalt cast thy lot amongst us; there shall be one purse amongst us all,' &c. In these speeches profit is propounded as a lure to draw the young man to theft and murder. The sense of the former of these two verses is, that by the course before spoken of, a rich booty, and great store of money, of jewels, and suchlike treasures, may be attained, and shall cer-



tainly be gotten. In the fourteenth verse an objection is presented which the young man may make, who may think or say that peradventure he shall take as much pains as other, but find less gains than they, seeing it is to be feared that such as are his masters in this trade, and captains in mischief, will challenge the greatest part unto themselves, or deal unjustly and unequally with him. Unto this doubt and secret objection the enticing robbers answer to this effect: Albeit we, O young man, who persuade thee to join with us in taking a purse, as captains or masters in this craft, may, by a kind of right, challenge to ourselves the greater part of the spoils; yet when we come to divide it we will suffer thee to cast in thy lot amongst us, that thereby thou mayest draw out such a portion as it shall give or assign thee, be it never so great a one. Now to this end, mates and fellows all, let every one of us bring that which we shall take from the travellers unto one common bag, out of which it being afterward drawn, shall by lot be parted amongst us all. 'My son, walk not in the same way with them; draw back thy foot from their path.' Whereas the robbers in the beginning of their oration said to the young man, 'Come with us;' the wise father here chargeth thee quite contrary, saying, 'Walk not in the same way with them.' The effect of Solomon's admonition is, that the young man is not in any case to keep these seducers company, but rather to renounce their acquaintance, and to have no liking of them nor dealing with them.

Ver. 16. *For with their feet they run unto mischief, and make haste to shed blood.* See Isa. lix. 7.

The wise father in this verse dissuadeth his son from the company of wicked robbers, by a reason taken from the mischievousness of their minds, which he layeth open. When he saith that 'with their feet they run into mischief,' he declareth unto the young man, that as thieves and robbers go about to enrich themselves, so they do not this without the harming of others, whom they spoil of their goods, and put in fear of their lives. Nay, that which is more, and which nature most abhorreth, they 'make haste to shed blood,' and foreslow no time to commit murder. Who would not now avoid the company of such detestable villanies, who not only themselves commit that crime, but counsel others thereunto? which causeth the earth to cry

for vengeance; which the magistrate is, according to God's commandment, to punish with death without shewing mercy; and, to conclude, which nature itself doth detest above all other.

Ver. 17. *Because the net is spread in vain before the eyes of every fowl.*

Ver. 18. *Therefore they lie in wait for their blood; they hide themselves privily for their lives.*

Ver. 19. *Such are the ways of every one who is greedy of gain; he would take away the life of the owners thereof.*

In these his last speeches the godly father discovereth unto his son the reason why the robbers will not openly be seen, but lurk in corners. He resembleth them not only to fowlers, but to cunning and skilful fowlers, who are careful in hiding their trains and nets, that they may not be espied of the birds: 'For the net is spread in vain before the eyes of every fowl.' A heathen poet observed thus much, and could say,

'From nets, the which too open lie,  
The wary bird away doth fly.'

Now if the fowls of the air have this wit by the instinct of nature, to fear and shun the snares which they suspect and perceive, much more then have men this reason and understanding to prevent open mischiefs, and to escape manifest dangers. Hence then it cometh to pass, that even as bird-catchers are wont to use secret net-laying, because if they should openly spread their snares or gins in the sight of the wily fowls, their labour should be in vain; so crafty money-catchers and thieves do therefore lurk in corners for blood, because otherwise, if they should be seen, they should easily be avoided, and frustrated of their purpose. This comparison of hunting is not only used here in this sense, but in other places of the Scripture. For the prophet Micah, complaining of the general corruption of all sorts of people in his time, speaketh thus: 'All that are, lie in wait for blood; every one hunteth his neighbour with a net,' Micah vii. 2. In this kind of hunting (if with the best writers I am not deceived) was Nimrod mighty before the Lord. Of such hunters and fowlers Jeremiah complaineth also, when he saith, 'Mine enemies do even hunt me as a bird undeservedly; they east my life into the pit, and fling stones at me,' Lam. iii. 52, 53. Wherefore,

as it followeth, 'Such are the ways of every one who is greedy of gain; he would take away the life of the owners thereof.' Wherein, as I take it, (neither only I, but some writers of singular good judgment,) the application of the former similitude is contained. The sum of this speech is, that such is the course of all such covetous robbers, that they are ready to take away a man's life to have his goods. For whereas they know they cannot lie hid, nor take away the rich man's goods, if they let him escape with his life; they must for their own safety, and for the obtaining of the prey, as it were even of necessity, shed his blood.

Ver. 20. *Wisdom crieth without; she listeth up her voice in the streets:*

Ver. 21. *She calleth on the top of the assemblies; she uttereth her voice at the entries of the gates in every city, (saying.)*

After that Solomon hath brought in a godly father warning and instructing his sons, now he raiseth up, as it were, a matron or queen-mother provoking her children unto virtue. Because he speaketh of perfect wisdom, which excelleth in the highest degree, therefore in the original text he calleth her *wisdoms* in the plural number, according to the Hebrew phrase. Indeed there is but one wisdom in regard of the author and fountain of all knowledge, who is Jesus Christ, the personal Wisdom of his Father; but in regard of the means and instruments which this eternal Wisdom useth to lighten men by, wisdom is manifold, and as it were several wisdoms are in sundry places, even in the fields, in the streets, in the churches, in the judgment seats of the city, for what corner or country is there wherein the light of truth shineth not, or is not revealed either by God's messengers, creatures, operations, or inspirations? But whereas it skilleth much after what manner speeches are delivered, it is worthy the observing, that these wisdoms well seen in musical harmony, or muses so full of heavenly wisdom, are said to cry and to lift up their voices. For do they publish the will of God unto us after the manner of criers, who make proclamation? do they lift up their voices as trumpets, to tell us of our transgressions? do they utter their words after the manner of orators, to persuade us unto the practice of all sorts of virtues? finally, do they sing, as the

Levites of Israel, to affect us with the feeling of matters spiritual? and do we like deaf adders stop our ears at the voice of the charmers, charm they never so wisely? or are we so fast asleep in our sins that no noises can awaken us out of the same? Truly then we are like unto those froward children, of whom our Saviour speaketh in the Gospel, who, sitting in the market-places, behave themselves so sullenly, that their companions cry out unto them and say, 'We have piped unto you, but ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, but ye have not wept,' Luke vii. 32.

Ver. 22. *How long (O ye simple ones) will ye love simplicity, and scorers delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge?*

Now wisdom beginneth her oration unto mortal men, whom first of all in these words she roundly reproveth. The obstinacy of men is reproveth in this question, *How long?* for this brief demand is thus much in effect, as if wisdom had said in larger speeches: O ye mortal men, how long will ye love vanity, and follow after leasing? will ye not only grievously sin, but continue in iniquity? will ye spend so many days, yea months, yea years, in the transitory pleasures of this world? finally, will ye always abuse my patience, and never profit by the means of your conversion? The vices wherein wisdom complaineth that mortal men so long continue, are these three in number: first, Their love of simplicity; secondly, Their delight in scorning; and thirdly, Their hating of knowledge. They are called simple ones who offend of ignorance and frailty; such are scorers, who continue in evil, and make but a mock of sin. To conclude, all hate knowledge that care not for it, but rather despise it, and rage against it.

Ver. 23. *Turn you at my correction: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.*

From reproving, wisdom cometh to exhorting, stirring men up partly to cease from doing evil, and partly to follow after that which is good. For whereas she calleth them to turn at her correction, she willeth them to return from vice to virtue, and from sin to grace. On the other side, whereas wisdom saith she will pour out her spirit, and make known her words, she promiseth to send

the Holy Ghost into the hearts of those that hearken to her, and to lighten their minds with heavenly knowledge by the preaching of the word. Thus, as the prophet speaketh in the psalm, 'The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him, and his covenant to be a witness unto them,' Ps. xxv. 14.

Ver. 24. *Forasmuch as I call, but ye refuse; I stretch out mine hand, but none regardeth;*

Ver. 25. *But ye withdraw yourselves from all my counsel, and yield not unto my correction:*

Ver. 26. *I will also laugh at your destruction, (or calamity,) and mock when your fear cometh;*

Ver. 27. *When your fear cometh like an horrible desolation, and your destruction approacheth as a whirlwind; when affliction and anguish shall come upon you.*

Ver. 28. *Then they shall call unto me, but I will not hear; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:*

Ver. 29. *Because they have hated knowledge, and not chosen the fear of the Lord:*

Ver. 30. *Nor yielded unto my counsel, but despised all my correction.*

Ver. 31. *Thus shall they eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own wicked devices.*

Ver. 32. *For ease slayeth the foolish, and the prosperity of fools destroyeth them.*

Ver. 33. *But he that hearkeneth unto me shall dwell securely, and be quiet from fear of evil.*

Hitherto we have heard how wisdom hath reprov'd and exhorted mortal men; now in these verses we are to consider how she upbraideth and threateneth them. First, She objecteth unto them their refusing to come at her call and beck, in these words, 'Forasmuch as I call, and ye refuse; I stretch out mine hand, and none regardeth.' The benefit of calling men by God's word is exceeding great; for God dealeth not thus with all people, neither have the heathen knowledge of his law. It is an honour to be invited to the feast of an earthly prince; how much more to be bidden unto the banquet of the King of kings? And as the desiring of any to dinner or supper is a sign of love and goodwill in him that offereth this courtesy, so it is a point of great ungentleness and sullenness for a man without just cause to refuse so kind a proffer; for in so doing he sheweth that he maketh none account at all of him, who not only hath borne to-

ward him a loving affection, but made declaration thereof in some sort, and gone about to seal it by certain pawns and pledges of friendship; yea, that which is yet more, he causeth him to lose the cost which he hath bestowed about provision and entertainment, and his messengers to lose their speech and their pains and travail. Wherefore the wise stand in this case so affected, that neither they can abide to be said nay, when they call their neighbours or friends to eat and drink with them, neither yet will lightly say nay themselves, when they are by any of their acquaintance requested home to their houses, thinking it a contempt to be denied when they seek to make other partakers of the good things which they possess and provide, and a fault to deny when they are spoken unto to taste the sweetness, not so much of a table well furnished, as of amity, and of a friend well affected. Now then, whenas those that are bidden to the kingdom of God, Luke xiv. 18, desire to be held excused, some pleading one thing, some another, how can this be but a great sin? but when God shall not only call with his voice, but all day long stretch out his hand to a rebellious people, continuing his word preached with all means thereunto appertaining; as the grace offered in this respect is doubled, so the sin of not profiting thereby is trebled and mightily increased. And yet nevertheless many there are who neither regard the Lord's word nor his works, yea, and who withdraw themselves from all his counsel, and yield not unto his correction. For though the Lord by his counsel instruct them to choose that which is good, and by his correction warn them to take heed of evil, yet they remain impenitent and disobedient; for they are like to stubborn children, who neither care for their father's advice nor stripes. Such were the inhabitants of Chorazin, of Bethsaida, Luke x. 13, yea, and of Jerusalem, among whom many good doctrines were taught, and many strange miracles wrought, but they no whit the better. Certainly the Lord will not suffer by any means this contempt of his judgments to be unpunished, nay, he will most severely revenge it, as appeareth by the words following: 'I will also laugh at your destruction, and mock when your fear cometh.' There is not in the Lord any such affection or disposition of laughing or mocking as is in man, but when in

the course of his providence he so worketh that he leaveth the wicked in their miseries, or maketh them a mocking stock to the world, he is said in the Scripture to scorn, or to have them in derision, because he dealeth as a man which scorneth. Now we know, that if no man visit him who is in adversity, the afflicted person taketh it heavily; but if any shall rejoice at his trouble, this is a double scorsey to him. Oh then, when the Lord himself shall not only not visit, but deride the wicked in the time of their calamities, must not this needs be unto them a state as hard to be borne as hell itself? Surely it must needs be a thing intolerable, especially considering that their fear cometh like a horrible desolation, and their destruction approacheth as a whirlwind. For although the Lord should not laugh at the wicked, being in a most woeful plight and condition; yet should they have sufficient cause to weep, and to shed even tears of blood, if it were possible. For, first, alas! (but why do I pity the impenitent, whom the Lord justly scorneth?) desolation shall strip and spoil them of all their comforts, ornaments, possessions, and inheritances: for if not in this world, yet in the world to come, they shall be deprived of all good things. Secondly, Even as the wind doth blow the dust or chaff hither and thither, or as the whirlwind doth suddenly throw down mighty trees and buildings, so some sudden judgment shall drive the unrepentant sinners into the grave and into hell-fire. The day of the Lord shall come upon them as a thief in the night, or as travail on a woman with child, which seizeth upon her suddenly, sometimes when she is asleep, sometimes when she is at meat, sometimes when she is least fearful, yea, and sometimes when she is most joyful. Last of all, as followeth in the next words, 'affliction and anguish shall come upon the wicked;' for the pains of the body and terrors of the mind shall wring and sting them here, while they live in this world; and when they are departed, the chains of darkness and torments of hell shall vex and plague them even for ever and ever. It may be that these wretches, when they feel such unspeakable miseries, will beg some crumb of the Lord's mercies, as Dives requested a drop of water at Abraham's hands, or will cry to Christ for comfort, as Esau howled unto Isaac for a blessing. But what saith

the Lord, or what saith the heavenly wisdom of God, Christ Jesus? 'Then shall they call unto me, but I will not hear; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.' This is a sore judgment, that God will not hear the prayers of unrepentant sinners when they are in misery; for when the afflicted are forsaken by men, this only refuge they have, that they may pray to God, wherein, if they find no comfort or help, how wretched is their estate! It may be here objected, that God sometimes granteth the desires of the wicked, and delivereth them out of trouble, when they cry unto him. This is true indeed, but when once the time of their utter ruin, and of the fulness of God's wrath cometh, then all their supplications and tears are vain; yea, though they seek the Lord early, and rise betimes to find him out, yet all their labour and travail shall be lost. A reason why these wicked people shall not be heard in their miseries, is rendered in the verses following, which shew what wrongs and injuries they have done to wisdom; for it is said that they have hated knowledge, and not chosen the fear of the Lord, nor yielded unto her counsel, but despised all her correction. A great fault it is even to hate that knowledge whereby God and Christ is made manifest; for this is eternal life, to know the Father to be the true God, and him whom he hath sent, Jesus Christ. Now this knowledge springeth from the fear and the word of God, which before hath been affirmed to be the beginning of wisdom. Wherefore, when men make no account of the fear of the Lord, this is another grievous sin of theirs. But to refuse or reject that good counsel of God, whereby he declareth to men the means of their welfare and salvation, or persuadeth them thereunto, is yet a higher degree, as it were, of rebellion. Only the despising of all correction, which is the last fault here rehearsed, is more heinous and unpardonable than all the former offences, inasmuch as it is a sign of an obstinate and reprobate heart not to be mollified or vanquished with any rebukes or punishments. No marvel then if wisdom, justifying her severity to all the world, do in the next verse even triumph over her enemies in these words, 'Thus shall they eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own wicked devices.' As if she should have said, this is the golden

harvest of the wicked, that as they sow to the flesh, so they shall reap of the flesh corruption; yea, this is also their cup or portion, that they shall not only be punished, but be made drunk as it were with the plagues of the Lord, which for their manifold misdeeds shall fall upon them in great abundance. These evils properly or principally come not upon the wicked from the Lord, but originally spring from themselves, as wisdom testifieth in the conclusion of her speech; for, saith she, ease, or as some translate, frowardness slayeth the foolish, and the prosperity of fools destroyeth them. The root of all sin, yea, of the utter ruin of all sinners, is their delight in iniquity, increased by hope of impunity, and by enjoying of prosperity for the time. The truth hereof may appear in that which the prophet Jeremiah speaketh of Moab. For, saith he, 'Moab is at rest from her youth, and is settled upon her dregs, neither is poured from vessel to vessel, and hath not gone into captivity; wherefore her favour remaineth in her, and her scent is not changed. For this cause the days will come, saith the Lord, when I will send strangers against her, which shall deal strangely with her, and shall empty her vessels and scatter her bottles,' Jer. xlviii. 11, 12. By which borrowed speeches the Lord meaneth that he will bring his judgments on the people of Moab, and by tossing and rolling them up and down, draw them to humility. To conclude, on the contrary side, saith wisdom, in the shutting up and pausing of her excellent oration, 'but he who hearkeneth to me shall dwell safely, and be quiet from fear of evil.' As if she should have said in larger speech, that person which obeyeth my precepts and putteth my counsels in practice, shall not only be safe from calamities and heavy judgments, but even free from the dread of evil, wherewith to be shaken is oftentimes very grievous; for indeed the godly, not being guilty to themselves of grievous crimes, or at least being assured of the remission of all their sins through Christ, have peace with God, and are secure in the midst of great dangers and troubles oftentimes. This promise then, in this place, is all one with that in Leviticus, where the Lord speaketh thus to the observers of his laws, 'You shall eat your bread even unto fulness, and dwell securely in the land,' Lev. xxvi. 5. Be it so, that some fits of fear, like

gudgings of an ague, in the midst of fiery temptation, begin sometimes to cause the faithful to quake a little, yet the grace of God's Spirit will so drive them out in time, and put them all to flight in such manner in the end, that instead of timorousness, stoutness; of unquietness, peace; of bashfulness, boldness; of shrinking, triumphing will arise. Oh the valiant courage and unterrified heart of the Christian knight and spiritual champion who is furnished with the whole armour of God, spoken of in the epistle to the Ephesians, and fighteth under the banner of divine wisdom, his renowned lady and mistress, for certainly he resteth in the secret of the Highest, and lodgeth in the shadow of the Almighty. Who saith unto the Lord, Thou art my refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I put mine affiance. What evil or instrument of death and destruction is there then whereof the faithful man hath cause to be afraid? The privy practices of Satan or his instruments need not any whit at all to trouble his mind, seeing God above will safely preserve him from the snare of the hunter, or crafty and cruel pursuer. As for the troublesome speech of the slanderer or accuser, (for so I take the meaning of the prophet, with the Greek translators, and the old Latin interpreter,) he need not be moved therewithal, seeing also he shall be delivered from the scourge of the tongue. Now so strong and large is the wing of our heavenly wisdom, and so broad and invincible is the shield of faith, whereby hold is laid on her, that no messenger of death, be he never so terrible; no weapon of destruction, be it never so sharp, like an arrow or dart; no pestilence, be it never so infectious; no disease, be it never so dangerous; finally, no evil, never so pernicious, at what time soever it shall be stirring, shall be able to hurt the righteous and innocent person, so that he hath no cause therewith to be affrighted. For though infinite millions of other people fall by famine, sword, pestilence, or other evils round about, yet the godly shall be preserved alive, if need require, for they shall be left as God's witnesses to behold the just vengeance of the Lord upon the wicked; even as the Israelites saw the Egyptians with their eyes drowned in the Red Sea. For when they make God their refuge, and the Highest their defenced city, no evil shall touch them, no, nor enter into their

family to the hurting of their children and servants, or harming of their house and possessions. Yea, moreover, as mothers or nurses carry their little infants in their hands, and keep them from falling; so the Lord's holy angels shall preserve the faithful in their journeys and outgoings in such sort, as that they shall receive no hurt in the way wherein they walk, the very stones of the street being in peace with them, and no more willing to hurt them than one loving friend is to hurt another. Neither only shall the godly not be hurt with evils, but even triumph over all evils, treading down and subduing by faith the lions and the dragons, according as we read that all sorts of wild beasts were so subject to Noah as to enter with him into the ark; and that both Samson overcame a lion, and David a lion and a bear; and to conclude, that Paul shook a viper off from his hand without receiving any harm, and fought with beasts at Ephesus, who could not overcome him. But moreover, and besides that, the true worshippers of God shall thus be more than conquerors in Christ over all evils; they shall also be partakers of most excellent good things, inasmuch as they love God unfeignedly, and know him truly. For howsoever the wicked shall cry, and wisdom will not hear, yet when they shall call, she will hearken, and be with them in affliction, and deliver them, and honour them, yea, she will grant them in this life long days and good, and in the world to come, eternal glory and happiness. But remembering myself, I must return to expound the Proverbs, and leave paraphrasing on this psalm, whereunto I was led by treading in the steps of Solomon, who in his writings followeth often his father's footing, and whose sentences commonly accord very justly with the instructions of that golden book of the praises of God, for so is the title thereof in the Hebrew text.

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## CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1. *My son, if thou wilt receive my sayings, and hide my commandments within thee;*

Ver. 2. *If listening with thine ears unto wisdom, thou wilt incline thine heart unto understanding;*

Ver. 3. *Yea, moreover, if thou callest after prudence, and liftest up thy voice to understanding;*

Ver. 4. *If thou shalt seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures;*

Ver. 5. *Then thou shalt understand the fear of God, and obtain the knowledge of God.*

Ver. 6. *For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth knowledge and understanding proceedeth.*

Ver. 7. *He hath laid up true substance for the righteous, and a shield for them who walk uprightly.*

Ver. 8. *Observing the paths of equity; and to conclude, he preserveth the way of his holy ones.*

Ver. 9. *Then shalt thou understand justice, and judgment, and equity, and every good path.*

Ver. 10. *When wisdom shall enter into thine heart, and knowledge be pleasant to thy soul.*

The wise king in these verses sheweth his son, both by what means he may attain unto wisdom, and what fruits he shall reap by wisdom once attained, setting down two sorts of good things which thereby he shall receive, the one the grace of fearing and knowing God; the other the grace of obedience to his will. Six means there are here specified, if I am not deceived, of attaining unto wisdom. The first is, The admitting of wisdom's speeches; for it is said, 'If thou wilt receive my sayings.' Even as therefore a man willingly taketh his friend's gift with his hand, so must we be ready and prepared to entertain the teachers and doctrine of God's word. The second is, Committing of good instructions to memory, as appeareth in that it is further added, 'and hide my commandments within thee.' Wherefore, as we use to lay up our treasures safely in the ground, or to keep our jewels under lock and key, so we must not let good lessons slip out of our mind, but keep them steadfastly and firmly in our remembrance. The third is, Listening with the ears unto wisdom; divers hear the word of God, but with such careless and drowsy ears, that it is in at the one ear, as we say, and out at the other; hereby it cometh to pass, that through the negligence of the hearer, the labour and doctrine of the speaker is commonly lost. Even as therefore worldlings, when they hear of some good bargain, hearken very diligently; or as they who think that one speaketh of them put their ears near to him that speaketh; so, if we will profit by heavenly doctrines, we must listen to them very attentively. The fourth is, 'If thou wilt incline thine heart to under-

standing.' All the religion of hypocrites is commonly outward—as outward going to the church, outward hearing, and outward speaking; but they that hear the word of God aright have an earnest desire unto it, and bend their wits upon it. For as the ground which receiveth the seed, and hath some good heart in it, bringeth forth fruits, so that person which inwardly receiveth and regardeth heavenly doctrine profiteth thereby, Mat. xiii. 23; James i. 5. The fifth is prayer, or an earnest begging of wisdom at God's hand: 'Yea, moreover, if thou callest after prudence, and liftest up thy voice to understanding.' 'For ask,' saith our Saviour, 'and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find.' 'And if any want wisdom,' saith James, 'let him ask it of God, who giveth to all frankly, and upbraideth none.' The sixth and last is labour and diligence, yea, such industry and painstaking as worldlings use to attain money and treasure; for it is said, 'If thou shalt seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures.' Inasmuch as heavenly riches far surpass earthly, the Lord might have required instantly of his children, even greater pains in seeking after wisdom, than worldlings use to take for the attaining of wealth. But herein appeareth the mercy of our God, that if we labour for graces but as earthly people do for riches, we shall be indued therewithal. Nevertheless, where is that Christian who so eagerly followeth after the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, that peerless pearl, as merchants seek for treasures? who for the same run into the farthest parts of the world, with danger of their lives, or, as common artificers follow their trades, who labour night and day, in heat and cold, to earn a little of the muck of this world. And yet great is the gain of godliness, and of heavenly wisdom, which if thou hast once obtained, then thou shalt understand the fear of God, and obtain the knowledge of God; for thou shalt be indued with such holiness and piety, that both thou shalt reverence and honour him, as thy king and judge, and have such an insight into his nature and will, that thou shalt be able to know and believe how he is disposed in himself, and how he standeth affected unto thee in Christ, Col. iii. 10. For the Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth knowledge and understanding proceedeth; he hath laid up true substance for the righteous, and a shield

for them that walk uprightly, observing the paths of equity; and to conclude, he preserveth the way of his holy ones, Eph. i. 17. As there is great cause to pray to God for wisdom, so we are not to doubt but we shall have it if we ask it. For as James also testifieth, 'Every good giving, and every perfect gift is from above, descending from the Father of light, who, according to his will, hath begotten us by the word of truth,' James i. 17; wherefore the Lord doth not only give knowledge to his worshippers, but true substance, even every good thing here, and an enduring substance and inheritance in heaven, Heb. x. 34. For how many good things hath the Lord treasured up for those that love him, as the prophet speaketh. Certainly he hath not only laid up for the righteous an infinite heap of excellent good things, but weapons of defence against evils, and armour, as it were, against the day of war, Ps. xxxi. 20. Oh that the precious sentence of the prophet David in the psalm, where he saith that the Lord is the sun, and a buckler, Ps. lxxxiv. 11, were written, not there only, but in every one of our hearts, and graven not with a pen of iron, but by the Spirit of God, within our souls and consciences! For then, believing him not only to be the author of grace and glory to us, but the defender of us from dangers and evils, we would more glorify him and more depend upon him than commonly we do, knowing and considering that his faith and truth are a surer protection than any spear or shield whatsoever. What should I speak more of the care which the Lord hath in guarding and defending his people? 'He doth even preserve the way of his holy ones:' for he hath not only given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways, but even himself watcheth over thee, and preserveth thy goings out and comings in, so that thou shalt not dash thy foot against a stone. Finally, 'Then shalt thou understand justice, and judgment, and equity, and every good path, when wisdom shall enter into thine heart, and knowledge be pleasant to thy soul:' for he that receiveth the word of God, and that with such joy and gladness that it seemeth to him sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb, shall not only be indued with holiness, but with obedience, and shall not only be enabled to know the truth, but to practise the duties of both the tables of the moral law. Let our hearts then be

opened that the heavenly wisdom of God may enter in, and let our affections be so set upon her that she may seem most amiable in our eyes, considering and remembering both what is said of her here, and taught by the apostle James, who commendeth her to be pure, holy, peaceable, and full of many good works and graces, James iii. 17.

Ver. 11. *Then counsel shall watch over thee, and understanding shall keep thee :*

Ver. 12. *To deliver thee from the evil way, (or the way of the evil man,) from the men that speak froward things ;*

Ver. 13. *Who leave the paths of righteousness, to walk in the ways of darkness, (evil men.)*

Ver. 14. *Who delight in doing evil, and exceedingly rejoice in most vile perverseness ;*

Ver. 15. *Who are crooked in their ways, and obstinate in their paths.*

We have heard before what good things wisdom bestoweth on those that possess her. Now Solomon declareth what evils she preserveth them from, naming one particular mischief in these verses, to wit, the seducing of ungodly men : ‘Then counsel shall watch over thee, and understanding shall keep thee.’ Then the advice, not of flesh and blood, but of God’s Spirit, will, as a watchman, look with open eyes that no hurt approach unto thee ; and then again discretion will, as a soldier armed with shield and spear, keep thee safe and sound from evils corporal and spiritual : ‘To deliver thee from the evil way, from the men that speak froward things.’ A chief and special fruit of wisdom’s watchfulness will be this, that thou shalt be preserved from the persnasions and allurements of those men that give evil counsel, or entice to the committing of villainies, for there is great danger of being entangled or ensnared by the speeches of such persons, and of being drawn into the practising of some mischief by their example. Now as these wicked men’s words are crooked, and contrary to the truth, so their works are foul and filthy ; for they leave the paths of righteousness, to walk in the ways of darkness. They not only refuse to do that which is good, but commit all wickedness with greediness, giving over themselves unto surfeiting, drunkenness, chambering, and wantonness, Rom. xiii. 14, and suchlike vices, which are the works, not of the day, but of the night ; yea,

that which is more, ‘they delight in doing evil, and exceedingly rejoice in most vile perverseness ;’ for they do not only commit idolatry, adultery, and such other abominations, but take great pleasure in the doing of evil themselves, and delight in others that practise all impiety and iniquity. To conclude, they are crooked in their ways, and obstinate in their paths ; for they are not only great sinners, but even unrepentant sinners. Even as then stubborn horses will stray out of the right way, and not be ruled and brought into the right path again ; so these wicked wretches will by no means be reclaimed, but rush on into all mischief, and proceed forward in all lewdness. These are those dangerous rocks of which the apostle Jude giveth warning to all Christians, lest thereby they make shipwreck of their salvation. These are those heretics which, compassing sea and land, seek to infect all sorts of vain people with their erroneous doctrine ; and when they have done, they make them the sons of hell a thousand times more than they were before. These are those pestilent philosophers, who are said to read lectures of atheism ; and profanes, accounting the books of Moses to be but a fable, and the sacred Scriptures to be but a device of human policy. Finally, these are those wicked companions, who, not thinking it enough wittingly and willingly to sin against God themselves, provoke and lead captive others unto the committing of all iniquity, and that with greediness. Is it not then a singular mercy of God, and a precious fruit of grace, to be preserved from such detestable and devilish men, whose very shadow, as it were, is contagious and deadly ? But here it may be objected, What ! are not even they that mean well sometimes seduced into error, or led aside to the allowing or following of some evil course by naughty men ? How then doth wisdom preserve all such as reverence or regard her from this bad kind of people ? Indeed, by such seducers or tempters as here are spoken of, the very elect are sometimes carried away into the approving of falsehood or doing of evil. But like as, if these well-meaning people had been always wise, they never should have fallen ; so if they have been once truly wise to their own salvation, they shall, by the Spirit of God within them, in the end be freed from corruption, and delivered out of temptation,



2 Pet. ii. 9, as Noah and Lot were out of God's judgment.

Ver. 16. *To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger who flattereth with her lips;*

Ver. 17. *Who forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.*

Ver. 18. *Inasmuch as she hath bent her house toward death, and her paths toward those who are void of life.*

Ver. 19. *Whosoever go unto her return not back, neither come unto the ways of life.*

Herein is shewed, that wisdom will preserve those who possess her from another most perilous evil—to wit, the naughty woman, who is called a stranger, though she be too familiar, because she should be strange, and doth in right pertain to some one husband. She is first described by her properties, and then the danger is laid open whereinto she casteth her companions. One of her qualities is, that she 'flattereth with her lips,' or maketh her speeches very smooth, which property is very justly given to her; for her custom is to entice young men to adultery by wanton words and plausible persuasions, telling them of her love, and what delight in dalliance they shall have. Another mark whereby she is noted out is, that 'she forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.' This misdemeanour of hers argueth her impiety and her impudency; for what greater shamelessness can there be in a woman than to cast away the veil of her eyes, yea, to reject that her husband, whom first she chose and was linked unto even in her tender years? Again, what greater ungodliness is there than to break that solemn promise which was made at the times of affiancing and marriage, both before God and his angels and people? It is a great fault to break promise in a small matter, how much more in the greatest contract or bargain that may be? If, then, only these bad qualities of the adulteress be considered, it is a great favour of God to be kept from yielding to her baits and snares. But her behaviour is not more foul and filthy than her house and company is dangerous and pernicious; for, 'inasmuch as she hath bent her house toward death, and her paths toward those that are void of life, whosoever go unto her return not back, neither come unto the ways of life.' The place where she keepeth is so perilous, and the way that leadeth thereto is so dangerous,

that whosoever meddle with her are caught in her snares, and meet with some judgment which God or man inflicteth; for commonly adulterers are pursued and slain, either by the woman's friends or husband whom they abuse, or by the magistrate's sword, or by the Lord's own hand. It is, then, even a greater mercy of God to be kept from the strange woman than from the pestilence or any deadly disease.

Ver. 20. *To the end that thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the just.*

The end why wisdom preserveth the faithful from evils, and delivereth them out of dangers, is here shewed to be, that they may serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life, following the example of the godly, by whom they may be directed and made better. It is not enough to shun the evil way, unless a man walk in the good way. Now this good way is the life of the holy men that have gone before, or that are living, wherein is no error, but hope of reward, inasmuch as it tendeth to the kingdom of heaven.

Ver. 21. *For they that are upright shall dwell on the earth, and the righteous shall remain therein.*

Ver. 22. *But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be plucked out of it.*

There is great cause, as herein is shewed, why a man should shun the bypaths of the wicked, and walk in the ways of the just; for, first, 'The upright shall dwell on the earth, and the righteous shall remain therein.' The elect and just shall continue for ever heirs in Christ of heaven and earth. Secondly, on the contrary side, 'The wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be plucked out of it.' They that are of corrupt conversation, and care not how they break the laws of God, shall by some particular judgment in this life, or by God's vengeance hereafter, be taken away, even as the grass is mown down, and together with their posterity, like fruitless plants or naughty trees, be quite rooted out, so that no memory of them shall remain. The event seemeth to be contrary to the promise here made, for the earth commonly is possessed by those who take evil ways, whilst in the mean season the godly are tossed up and down with many afflictions. But we must consider, for our comfort, that the wicked wrongfully and unlawfully, as usurpers, possess the earth and the goods of this world; and

again, that by many troubles, and by death in the end, they are put out of their possession at the last. As for the godly, they by right inherit the earth, so that, as Abraham was the heir of the land of promise even when he had not a foot of ground therein, in like manner all the godly are heirs of this world, according to the saying of the apostle, that all things are theirs, 'whether it be the world, or things present, or things to come,' 1 Cor. iii. 22; howsoever often here they possess little or nothing. Although, therefore, the godly are molested, and even put to death by the wicked oftentimes, yet in right they are heirs, and in part possessors of the earth, looking also by hope for a new heaven and a new earth, according to God's promise, wherein the just shall dwell, 2 Pet. iii. 13. This is, then, a most sure and faithful saying, that the upright shall dwell on the earth, Ps. xxxvii. 29, which, as David had taught before this our Solomon, so our Saviour confirmeth in the Gospel, where he saith, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,' Mat. v. 5.

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### CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1. *My son, forget not my doctrine; but let thine heart keep my precepts:*

Ver. 2. *For they shall heap upon thee length of days, and years of life, and peace.*

In this third chapter Solomon exhorteth and instructeth his son the third time. In this entrance thereof he prepareth him by a general preface to receive the special commandments following. In the first verse he warneth him to look to two points, the one, that he forget not his doctrine, the other, that he keep his precepts. They are said in the Scripture to forget the word who either let good lessons slip out of their memories, as the disciples of our Saviour often did his sayings, or put not the truth into practice, as that natural man of whom James speaking saith, that he looketh his face in a glass, and immediately forgetteth of what fashion it is, James i. 23. Now, on the other side, they are said to keep the word in their hearts who lay up wholesome instruction in their remembrance, and practise them in their lives, being like herein to the thrifty householder who treasureth up his goods, or

to the good ground which keepeth the corn, in time convenient bringeth forth fruit, Luke viii. 15. Great rewards are promised in the second verse unto those who obey good admonitions. First of all, A promise is made unto them of long life, the root whereof is to be found in the fourth commandment of the moral law; secondly, A promise is made also of peace, that is to say, of prosperity even in these outward things; for godliness hath the promises both of this life and the life to come. But here may some say, How are these promises performed, seeing oftentimes the wicked live as long or longer than the godly, and enjoy outward blessings more than they? To answer briefly unto this doubt, first, The promises of God touching outward blessings, are not absolute or simple, but conditional; secondly, The obedience of the godly is not full, but in part, and therefore no marvel it is if in part only they are made partakers of outward blessings. Last of all, The Lord, giving his children in heaven eternity and glory, performeth a great deal more than here he doth promise.

Ver. 3. *Let not mercy (or goodness, or bounty) and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:*

Ver. 4. *And thou shalt find favour and good success before the eyes of God and man.*

In these verses, two points or precepts are summarily propounded, which throughout the whole chapter afterward are severally handled. To be brief, herein two virtues are commended, and two rewards promised unto the practice of them. The former virtue is mercy, whereby all sorts of duties serving to the benefiting of men are to be understood, as alms, visiting of the fatherless and widows, and suchlike; the latter is truth, under which gift faith unfeigned, and sincerity in all actions, is comprehended. For, indeed, the end of the law, as Paul speaketh to Timothy, is love, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned, 1 Tim. i. 5. And behold, saith David in the psalm unto the Lord, 'Behold, thou art delighted with truth, and in secret hast made wisdom known unto me,' Ps. li. 6. Now, even as signs and frontlets, which are bound about the face or neck, are always present, so both these virtues must always be meditated on and practised. Again, as notes or letters written in paper or graven in metal continue; so

these graces must continually be thought on, and firmly written, not in paper or in stone, but in the fleshly tables of our hearts. The self-same thing is here signified which is set down in Deuteronomy, where it is said, 'Lay up these my words in your hearts and minds, and bind them for a sign on your hands, and place them between your eyes,' Dent. xi. 8. A like phrase is used by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. iii., and by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. viii. The rewards promised to the forenamed virtues being also two, the former of them is favour, whereby is meant the well liking of the Lord, 1 Pet. i. 3, before whose eyes the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptibility of a gentle and meek spirit, is much worth and most amiable. The latter reward is good success, that is, prosperity and acceptation among men, who are wont to love and recompense such as do them good. This promise then is all one in a manner with that which the apostle Paul setteth down in the Epistle to the Romans, where, speaking of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, he saith, 'that he which in these things serveth Christ, pleaseth God, and is acceptable to men,' Rom. xiv. 18.

Ver. 5. *Trust in the Lord with thy whole heart, but lean not unto thine own understanding.*

Ver. 6. *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths.*

The first particulate duty which we are exhorted to perform to the Lord is herein set down: 'Trust in the Lord with thy whole heart,' doubt not of God's favour in Christ, or of the truth of any of his promises, 'but lean not unto thine own understanding,' on the contrary side, think not by thine own policy to avoid evils, or to attain unto good things. For indeed so long as we put any confidence in our own gifts, we can never truly or surely rely on God alone, or look for help from him only. Yea, that which is more, the wisdom of the flesh is enmity to God, and the natural understanding of man is not able to comprehend spiritual mysteries, but disputeth against the plain truth of God's word or promises. 'In all thy ways acknowledge him.' In all the actions of thy life, set the Lord only before thee; ask counsel what is best to be done at his word, call upon him by

prayer, give him thanks, and refer all things to his glory. 'And he will direct thy paths,' the Lord will bless thy counsel and enterprises; for it cannot be but that we must needs find God an approver and defender of those actions and courses which we attempt and go about in his name and fear, having him for our author and captain.

Ver. 7. *Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear God, and depart from evil.*

Ver. 8. *So health shall be unto thy navel, and moisture unto thy bones.*

In these verses we have the second duty of piety commended unto us: 'Be not wise in thine own eyes;' follow not thy corrupt reason, neither in matters of religion nor in the ordering of thy life and conversation; but follow the line of God's word in all things. For indeed conceit and self-love causeth men to err most grossly, and to think they do very well when they do very ill, as also to be secure in their sins, yea, to defend themselves in their most wicked deeds, as may appear in Saul's offering of sacrifice, and sparing of Agag, 1 Sam. xiii. 9, and xv. 13. 'Fear God, and depart from evil:' be not so bold as to worship God after thine own conceit, but follow the direction of his word, and reverence his majesty, who will grievously plague thee if thou continuest obstinately in thy will-worship or evil course of life. Wherefore, if thou hast been overtaken with any sin, forsake it, because thou canst not please God nor do good, before thou hast departed from that which is evil. 'So health shall be unto thy navel, and moisture unto thy bones:' when thou confessest and forsakest thine iniquity, then, if thou art visited with sickness or any adversity, thou shalt be restored to health, and enjoy the welfare both of body and soul. The prophet David felt the experience hereof in his own person, Ps. xxxii. 2-5, &c., for all the while that he kept close his sin his humours were turned into the drought of summer; but when he made it known, or confessed it, then the Lord took away the punishment of his iniquity, so that on the contrary side there was health to his navel, and moisture to his bones.

Ver. 9. *Honour God with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of thy whole increase.*

Ver. 10. *So shall thy barns be filled with plentiful-*

ness, and thy wine-presses break in sunder with new wine.

These verses contain a precept, wherein the third duty of godliness is prescribed: 'Honour God with thy substance;' by outward signs of thankfulness, as by paying of tithes, and by bestowing thy goods on holy uses, declare and express that reverence and account which thou hast the Lord in. Albeit, where ability is wholly wanting, the Lord is content with the inward thankfulness of the mind alone: yet he would have those who are rich, or of ability, to declare the gratitude of their hearts, by outward testimonies and fruits of obedience. The ninth verse is nothing else, in sum, but a repetition or exposition of that statute of the Lord in Exodus, concerning the paying of first-fruits and suchlike oblations to him: for in the four and thirtieth chapter of that book, and the six and twentieth verse, Moses saith to the people of Israel from the Lord, 'Bring all the first-fruits, the first-fruits of thy land, into the houses of Jehovah thy God.' Now, albeit, we are not at this time tied, as the Israelites in old time were, to bring our eorn and wine into the temple to be offered, or beasts to be sacrificed, or the first-born to be redeemed with a sum of money; yet we ought to honour the Lord by bestowing our goods on holy uses, as on the maintenance of the ministry, and the relief of the poor: for this cause Paul saith to the Galatians, 'Let him which is instructed in the word, minister to him who instructeth him in all things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked,' Gal. vi. 6. Now, whereas here we are exhorted not only to honour God with our substance, but with the first-fruits, or, as the word also importeth, the chief of our increase: this sheweth that it is not enough for us, when God hath given us abundance, to bestow only a little, and that of the worst of our goods, on good uses; no, but we must be very frank and liberal, sowing plentifully, that also we may reap plentifully. Truly, if any be indued with zeal or faith indeed, they will not be sparing or niggardly, but very forward and bountiful in those things which appertain to the Lord. An example of the truth hereof we may have in Abel: for whereas Moses affirmeth that Abel did offer a gift to the Lord of the first-born and fattest of his flock, Gen. iv. 4; the apostle unto the Hebrews plainly teacheth that he, by faith, offered a greater

sacrifice to the Lord than Cain, Heb. xi. 4, insinuating that, because Abel believed in God, he cared not what cost he bestowed on his worship. The promise which, in the tenth verse, is made unto those who honour the Lord with their goods, importeth thus much, that such shall not want in this world or the world to come, but enjoy store of all good things. Worldly people commonly think that if they bestow much on good uses they shall go a-begging, and that whatsoever goeth that way is lost. But here we are taught that by our liberality toward the maintenance of God's service we do not only not lose, but gain much to ourselves. For this cause the prophet Malachi speaketh thus to the people of Israel, 'Bring your tithes into the treasure-house, that in mine house there may be food, and try me now herein, saith the Lord of hosts, whether I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and bring forth a blessing without measure,' Mal. iii. 10.

Ver. 11. *My son, despise not the chastisement of the Lord; neither faint under his correction:*

Ver. 12. *For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.<sup>1</sup>*

These sentences, wherein a fourth duty of piety is commended, contain partly an exhortation unto patience, and partly a reason enforcing the same. 'My son, despise not the chastisement of the Lord;' make not light account of the Lord's visitation, either imputing it unto chance or fortune, or suffering it to pass without any fruit or profit to thine own soul. 'Neither faint under his correction.' Torment not thyself with grief, languish not nor pine away, quail not nor shrink under the crosses which the Lord layeth on thee, be they never so many, so great, or so continual. 'For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth;' for the Lord, oftentimes suffering his enemies to go unpunished in this world, in great favour, chasteneth his friends, as it were, that they should not perish with the world. 'And he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.'<sup>2</sup> The Lord also schooleth by adversity every one whom he admitteth to be his spiritual son or daughter.

<sup>1</sup> *Uce ab*, I turn scourgeth, reading it rather *ca ab*, as the apostle did, Heb. xii. 6, and as the same word is used, Job v. 17, where see the root of this instruction.

<sup>2</sup> See this place of Scripture amplified and applied, Heb. xii. 5, 6.

Ver. 13. *Blessed is that man who findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.*

Ver. 14. *For the merchandise thereof is better than the merchandise of silver, and the revenue thereof is better than gold.*

Ver. 15. *She is more precious than pearls, and all thy delights are not to be compared unto her.*

Now the wise king returneth to commend that wisdom, whereof he hath before entreated: 'Blessed is the man who findeth wisdom'—happy is he who attaineth to the knowledge of God; 'and the man that getteth understanding'—happy is he that cometh unto the practice of God's will; 'for the merchandise thereof is,' &c., Eccles. vii. 13; for the gain which is gotten hereby is exceeding great, seeing wisdom preserveth the life of a man, and bringeth him unto salvation. 'She is more precious than pearls,' &c., Mat. xiii. 46. To conclude, wisdom is also more excellent and more pleasant than all the treasures or pleasures of this world, Ps. xix. 10, which are but dung in regard of the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, Phil. iii. 8.

Ver. 16. *Length of days is in her right hand: in her left hand riches and honour.*

Ver. 17. *Her ways are the ways of pleasantness; her paths are all (paths) of peace.*

Ver. 18. *She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; and they who keep her are blessed.*

The gifts which wisdom bestoweth on men are rehearsed in these verses. 'Length of days are in her right hand.' Wisdom giveth long life, yea, immortality, to those who seek after her, whilst in the mean season the ungodly perish by untimely death, some of them wasting their strength by adultery, some of them overwhelming their stomachs with drink, some consuming their hearts with ennui, some breaking their galls with anger, some being slain in frays, some executed by course of laws; finally, some being cut off by the immediate hand of the Lord himself. 'In her left hand riches and honour.' Moreover, wisdom, as a bountiful queen, giveth to them who obey her, not only long life, but worldly wealth and earthly glory, or at the least, spiritual graces, which are durable riches, and eternal salvation, which is a crown of immortal glory. 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness; her paths are paths of peace.' Furthermore, wisdom worketh joy in the

Holy Ghost, so as that the spiritual worshipper of God not only practiseth the word of God with delight, Mat. xi. 30, or meditateth therein with exceeding comfort, 1 John v. 3, but feeleth certain sugared motions of the Spirit, Phil. iv. 7, together with peace—that is to say, inward and outward quietness; so that the godly wise man is at rest within himself, and moreover, through the favour of the Lord, findeth good success in all things, and prosperity. The stones of the street and the beasts of the field are in league with him who walketh uprightly. He that is under the shadow of the Almighty, shall not need to fear the arrow nor the noisome pestilence. Now, because it would be endless to prosecute in this sort all the particular fruits which wisdom worketh in her children, Solomon concludeth that which was affirmed in the beginning, with an effectual and excellent sentence, saying, 'She is a tree of life to those who lay hold on her, and they who keep her are blessed,'—that is to say, she saveth men's souls, and maketh them immortal. Look, then, what a manner of thing the tree of life in paradise was, which was a sign of God's favour, Gen. iii. 22; or the tree of life shewed to Moses in Marah was, which sweetened the bitter and deadly waters, Exod. xv. 25; or the tree of life seen by John in the Revelation was, which brought forth twelve fruits, and the leaves thereof were for the curing of the Gentiles, Rev. xxii. 2; or, to conclude, any living or good tree is, which bringeth forth fruit whereby men may live; such a thing is the wisdom of God, which sealet us unto our election, bringeth forth in us the fruits of sanctification, purgeth out our corruption, and maketh us partakers of salvation.

Ver. 19. *The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; he hath established the heavens by understanding.*

Ver. 20. *By his skill the depths have been cleft in sunder, and the clouds above drop down the dew.*

In these sentences the praises of wisdom are enlarged by the mentioning of those great things which thereby the Lord hath wrought in the world. It ought not to seem strange unto any, that Solomon, having before considered wisdom as it is possessed by man, now proceedeth to speak of it as it lodgeth in the bosom of Jehovah, even the first person in the Trinity, for so this name is taken in this place.

The river and the fountain are both of one nature ; and when pure water hath been looked on in the stream, it is a pleasant thing to behold it in the conduit head. Now Jesus Christ, the wisdom of the Father, working together with him, is here shewed to have wrought four excellent works of wonder. The first is, The founding of the earth, which being made of nothing, and being upheld by nothing, save only by the power of God, and yet being also the mother and pillar of all things, must needs be a foundation and groundwork of singular skill and cunning. The second is, The establishing of the heavens, which declare the glory of God, as the prophet speaketh ; the heat of the sun, the moisture of the moon, the influence of the stars, the motions of the celestial globes, are manifest proofs of understanding incomprehensible. If we marvel at the little clocks which are made by the art of man, how much more may we justly wonder at the sky, the dial of the world? The third is, The cleaving of the deeps in sunder ; as the mercy of God appeareth herein, that the earth as a nurse giveth waters as milk, to quench the thirst of the creatures ; so his wisdom doth no less shew itself, in that a passage is made in the ground and hardest rocks for soft and moist waters to pierce through, and to rise up by, Ps. civ. 8. Now to come to the last effect of wisdom, the Lord in causing the vapours to ascend out of the earth, to the end that, being distilled in the air, they might fall down as honey-drops on the ground beneath, declareth his rare and singular art and cunning. Not without cause then is this reckoned among the works of divine wisdom, that 'the clouds above drop down the dew,' whereby the withered plants are refreshed, and the parched earth is cooled. And yet all this while nothing is said of the frosts, of snow, of hail, of other meteors or creatures, wherein the great power or the singular wisdom of God appeareth. But the sums of all that doctrine which in these sentences is taught, is, that by the Son of God all things were made, and are continually governed and preserved.

Ver. 21. *My son, let not these things depart from thine eyes; keep true wisdom and counsel.*

Ver. 22. *And they shall be life unto thy soul, and a grace unto thy neck.*

Ver. 23. *Then shalt thou go on thy way securely, and not stumble with thy foot.*

Ver. 24. *If thou shalt lie down, thou shalt not be afraid; but whilst thou retest, thy sleep shall be sweet.*

Ver. 25. *Thou shalt not be afraid of any sudden terror, or of the destruction of the wicked, when it cometh.*

Ver. 26. *For God will be present with thy trust, and keep thy foot from being caught.*

Solomon cometh now to apply that doctrine touching the excellency of wisdom which he hath taught in the verses going before. In the one and twentieth verse he giveth his son an admonition ; in the rest, he sheweth him the fruits which he shall receive by obeying his instructions. 'My son, let not these things depart from thine eyes ; keep true wisdom and counsel, or advisement.' Even as they who love anything, continually and constantly set their eyes on that wherewith they are enamoured ; so cast thine eye always, and perpetually meditate on, that heavenly wisdom which descendeth from above, James iii. 17, and is contrary to that false and feigned wisdom which is earthly, sensual, and devilish. 'And they shall be life unto thy soul, and a grace unto thy neck.' So, by the word of God and his Spirit, thou shalt be nourished in this life unto eternal life, yea, thou shalt also be made partaker of the ornaments of this life and the life to come, shining as a star on earth and in heaven. 'Then shalt thou go on thy way securely, and not stumble with thy foot.' So, prospering in thine affairs, thou shalt be free from the arrow that flieth by day, neither shalt thou commit any such wickedness, or incur any such danger or trouble, as that thou shalt fall, or at the least without rising again. 'If thou shalt lie down thou shalt not be afraid ; but whilst thou retest, thy sleep shall be sweet.' So not only abroad, but at home, not only in the day-time, but in the night-season, when troubles most stir in the heart, and enemies practise mischief, thou shalt be safe, and without dread or perplexity of spirit. This is that which the prophet speaketh of in the psalm, when he saith that the Lord giveth his beloved sleep, Ps. cxxvii. 2. Nevertheless true it is, that sometimes the Lord holdeth the eyes of his children waking, as he did David's, Ps. lxxvii. 4 ; and troubled

them with fearful dreams, as he did Job, chap. vii. 14; but when he dealeth thus with them, it is either to chastise them for their offences, or to try their faith, or to stir them up to prayer, or to warn them of some thing to come to pass. Otherwise ordinarily they take most sweet naps, yea, even then oftentimes when they are in greatest troubles. The case standeth otherwise with the ungodly, who never lightly have peace, but are as a raging sea, only expecting temporal judgments and eternal condemnation. Hence it cometh to pass that even in the night season, whilst they are asleep, horrible dreams affright them, as may appear in Nebuchaduezzar, Dan. ii. 1, and afterward grievous interpretations thereof arise in their hearts, as is manifest by that exposition which one of the Midianites gave of his neighbour's dreams, when Gideon made war against that people, Judges vii. 13, 14. Thou shalt not be afraid of any sudden terror, nor of the destruction of the wicked when it cometh, for God will be present with thy trust, and keep thy foot from being caught.<sup>1</sup> To conclude; so when thousands shall fall on thy right hand, or ten thousand on thy left; when some pestilence or sword, or other plague, shall sweep away the wicked, thou shalt be of good courage, or, at the least, have no cause to fear; for not mortal men only, no, nor celestial angels alone, but the Lord himself, shall stand by thee to defend and succour thee, upon condition that thou put thy trust in him. True it is that the godly are sometimes enwrapped in those common calamities which befall the wicked; but always, as the apostle speaketh, they receive the reward of their faith, even the salvation of their souls, 1 Pet. i. 9, for which cause they may be always secure.

Ver. 27. *Withhold not the good from the owners thereof, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.*

Now Solomon cometh to prescribe those duties which properly belong to the second table of the law, as the former did to the first.<sup>2</sup> In this verse he chargeth his son in no case to keep back from others the things which are due unto them, in regard of their necessity, or of right which they have there-

unto. The borrower is then to repay his debt to the lender; the finder to restore that which he hath taken up to the loser; he which hath received anything into his custody, is to bring it forth to him who reposed trust in him; the master is to pay the servant his wages. Finally, every one is to practise that precept of the apostle, 'owe nothing to any man, but to love one another,' Rom. xiii. 8.

Ver. 28. *Say not unto thy neighbour, Go thy way and return, to-morrow I will give thee; when the thing is with thee.*

Herein every one is commanded in no case to defer the doing of good deeds. Three causes there are why gifts should be given, and help lent to our neighbours without delay: the first is, For that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver; the second, That whilst we defer our help the souls of our brethren may faint or their bodies perish; the last is, That delay is a sign of an unwilling mind.

Ver. 29. *Practise no evil against thy neighbour, when he dwelleth peaceably by thee.*

Treachery or practising of mischief against those who dwell in the same place with us, is here forbidden. Injury is to be done to none, but to do wrong to a friend or neighbour, yea, to devise or practise mischief against one that abideth in the same town or city with us, and therein carrieth himself quietly, is above all things to be avoided, as a sin most odious unto God and man. David, pondering the grievousness of this iniquity, wisheth that, if he had committed it, then the enemy might take his soul, and lay his honour in the dust, Ps. vii. 4. Nevertheless, many now-a-days exercise this craft, as it were, only bending their wits how to draw into trouble such simple and harmless people as dwell where they do.

Ver. 30. *Strive not with any man causeless, when he hath done thee no harm.*

Quarrelling or brabbling is condemned in this instruction. The meaning hereof is thus much, in any case neither provoke to wrath, nor molest him who meddleth not with thee, nor hath any way offended thee. It is lawful to confer privately, or to complain to a magistrate, of a wrong offered. But to lay blame on any one who is not faulty, or to accuse an innocent person, or to contend with one who is quitted, is to overthrow all humanity and

<sup>1</sup> See the root of these sentences, Job v. 21; Ps. xci; and the use thereof, Phil. i. 23.

<sup>2</sup> See the ground hereof, Exod. xxii. 7, 14.

society. Josiah would needs take up the sword against Pharaoh-Necho, but he perished by it. Now whereas here it is said, 'when he hath done thee no harm,' these words contain no warrant of private revenge, or of wreaking our anger upon every one who giveth us just occasion of offence, but a reason proving that we are not to strive with a man causeless, whereof this is the sum, that it were an unreasonable thing to molest those who have not deserved to be molested.

Ver. 31. *Fret not at a troublesome man, (or a man of violence or oppression,) neither choose any of his ways.*

Ver. 32. *For the froward is abomination to the Lord, but his secret is with the upright.*

Ver. 33. *The curse of God is in the wicked man's house, but the dwelling of the righteous is blessed.*

Ver. 34. *Surely he will scorn the scorers, but he will give grace to the humble.*

Ver. 35. *The wise shall inherit honour, but shame shall take away fools.*

In this conclusion of the chapter, first, An exhortation not to envy the wicked is contained.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Sundry reasons are set down, both enforcing this admonition, and those which before have been given. 'Fret not at a troublesome man, neither choose any of his ways;' neither grudge at the rage or power of any who annoyeth thee, or other, neither be drawn aside by his prosperous estate to like of his doings, or to fawn on him. 'For the froward is abomination to the Lord, but his secret is with the upright.' For, first of all, God abhorreth the obstinate as his enemies, shunning them also as filthy excrements or serpents, but he hath a secret fellowship with the godly as his friends, visiting them in troubles, bestowing his blessings on them, talking with them by his word, and drawing near unto them by his Spirit. 'The curse of God is in the wicked man's house, but the dwelling of the righteous is blessed.' Secondly, God doth plague the house of the wicked, overthroweth their habitations by tempests, putting grief into their hearts, and sending diseases on them and theirs; but, in the mean season, he blesseth the righteous in their goods, their bodies, their souls, and the places wherein they keep. 'Surely he will scorn the scorers, but he will give grace to the humble.'

<sup>1</sup> See the root hereof, Ps. xxxvii. 25; Job v. 3.

Thirdly, The Lord resisteth the proud, crossing their enterprises, overthrowing their estates, pouring on them temporal and eternal plagues; but he honoureth the lowly, induing them with outward blessings, the inward gifts of his Spirit, and immortal glory. The truth hereof may appear in the examples of the builders of the tower of Babel: Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, on the one side; and in Abraham, Job, John the Baptist, Elisabeth, and the Virgin Mary, on the other. Now they are called lowly who willingly submit themselves to the Lord, neither refuse anything which either by the word of God, or his providence, is imposed on them. 'The wise shall inherit honour, but shame shall take away fools.' Last of all, They who are wise unto the Lord and their own salvation shall be advanced to account and estimation, if not in this life, yet in the world to come, where they shall be crowned with everlasting glory; but as for those fools who contemn God's word, and follow their own fancies, the Lord will make them spectacles of vengeance and shame, either on earth, or at the day of judgment in hell. If, then, the enemies of God may be pitied by the faithful, for these causes the godly are rather to take compassion on them, than either in regard of their rage to be moved to any passion, or in respect of their prosperity, which lasteth but a while, to follow their iniquity, which shall be punished for ever.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1. *Hear, O sons, the instruction of your father, and hearken to know prudence:*

Ver. 2. *For I give you a good precept, therefore forsake not my doctrine.*

In these verses is contained a preface to the precepts following, wherein the wise king stirreth up all to hearken to his instructions, declaring that there is good cause why they should so do. For first he claimeth obedience and attention to his advice, by the fatherly authority which he challengeth to himself, calling them his sons. Inasmuch, then, as they must needs be unnatural children that will not lend their ears, and bend their hearts, when their father speaketh, Solomon being



our spiritual father to advise us in the Lord, we should be very undutiful and ungodly if we should not be ready to hear and obey his counsel, especially seeing also he protesteth that his precept or doctrine is good. For he is deprived of his wits, and void of reason, that will refuse to listen to those sayings which many ways may be comfortable and profitable to him. Seeing, then, this divine instructor writeth not the fancies of his own head, or the traditions of men, but delivereth unto us the good word of God, which is able to save our souls, let us mark those lessons which he giveth us with all care and heedfulness.

Ver. 3. *Whilst yet I was my father's son, a tender and only one in the sight of my mother,*

Ver. 4. *He instructing me, said unto me, Let thine heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, that thou mayest live.*

Ver. 5. *Purchase wisdom, purchase prudence; forget not, nor decline from the speeches of my mouth.*

Ver. 6. *Forsake her not, and she will keep thee; love her, and she will preserve thee.*

Ver. 7. *First of all (seek) wisdom, purchase wisdom; and with thy whole possession purchase prudence.*

Ver. 8. *Magnify her, and she will advance thee; if thou shalt embrace her, she will honour thee.*

Ver. 9. *She will set on thine head a comely attire; she will put upon thee a crown of glory.*

In the beginning of these verses Solomon enforceeth his former exhortation by his own example: Even as, saith he, I found much good by obeying my father David's advice, so it will go well with you if you shall yield unto mine admonitions, now that I go about to instruct you. He maketh mention of his tender age, and dearness to his mother, to declare unto us that no affection, nor want of age, could hinder his parents from instructing him. Parents are here admonished not to cocker their children in their tender years, but to train them up in the information of the Lord; neither are fathers and mothers to think their duty discharged when they have passed over the care of their children unto schoolmasters or friends, but, as appeareth by David's example in this place, they must themselves with their own eyes watch over them, and with their own mouths instruct them. But whereunto especially did David exhort his son? Even as it followeth,

to purchase wisdom, and to purchase prudence. Whereas other parents commonly are careful to leave unto their children worldly treasures, and are earnest with them to be good husbands, in procuring of goods and lands to themselves; David's study and endeavour, as here appeareth, was to stir up his son to use all means of attaining spiritual and heavenly riches; for in these words he willeth him, by selling his commodities and pleasures, and by taking such pains, and laying out such costs, as purchasers are wont to do when they go about to get some good bargain to themselves, to procure to himself the knowledge of God's will, and the discretion of his Spirit, which graces, once attained, are by no means to be neglected or foregone. Indeed wisdom, as before we have heard, is the good gift of God; but, as the common proverb is, the Lord doth sell all things for man's labour, so that it may be bought and purchased after a certain sort. Great cause there is why wisdom should not only be followed after, but be held fast as a most precious jewel; for, saith David, 'forsake her not, and she will keep thee; love her, and she will preserve thee.' So doing, wisdom and prudence, as certain watchmen, will shield thee that thou come not into any danger, or if peradventure thou shalt fall into any trouble, they will preserve and deliver thee from destruction. Wherefore it is not without cause, that in the next verse this admonition is given, 'First of all seek wisdom, purchase wisdom and with thy whole possession purchase prudence; for before all things, and above all things, we are to labour after the kingdom of God, Mat. vi. 33; being ready to part with our sweetest delights and richest commodities, that we may obtain the understanding of God's will: wherefore they take a preposterous course, and set the cart before the horse as it were, that chiefly and principally seek after the transitory treasures of this life, being less careful for the good and salvation of their souls, than they are for those things that appertain to the use or preservation of their bodies. But to conclude, every one is to know, that the labour which he taketh in following after wisdom is not lost, and that she is indeed a good mistress to serve, for, 'Magnify her, and she will advance thee; if thou shalt embrace her, she will honour thee. She will set on thine head

a comely attire ; she will put upon thee a crown of glory.' To magnify wisdom, is to count all things to be but dung in regard of her, and to have her in singular reverence ; to embrace her, is to love her entirely, and to make much of her. Thus if thou shalt exalt and entertain wisdom, she as a queen will make thee honourable, and as it were a knight, or a lord, so that thou shalt be preferred to some good living, or be lifted up unto such dignity in the commonwealth, or church of God, that thou shalt seem very gracious and glorious to men and angels ; neither shall the glory whereunto thou shalt be advanced be mean, but exceeding great and princely ; so that it may be compared to an ornament that is put on the head, or to the diadem wherewith kings and emperors are crowned ; for wisdom will either bring thee to some office of rule and government in this world, or will make thee a spiritual king, and an inheritor of eternal glory. These promises of David were fulfilled in Solomon ; for whereas he chose wisdom above all other things, he thereby obtained great honour and fame, and in regard thereof, was with the general consent and joy of all the Israelites received and lifted up to the kingdom.

Ver. 10. *Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings ; and years of life shall be multiplied unto thee.*

Ver. 11. *I teach thee the way of wisdom ; I lead thee by the paths of equity.*

Ver. 12. *When thou shalt walk, thy gait shall not be strait ; and if thou shalt run, thou shalt not be hurt.*

Ver. 13. *Lay hold on her instruction ; leave not off : keep her ; because she is thy life.*

Not without cause doth the Spirit of God call every one thus often unto the study of wisdom ; which, as it is a matter of great importance, so all men by nature being prone to evil, it is a very hard thing to draw them to the love of virtue and to the practice of holy duties. Whereas then here again the godly father saith, 'Hear, my son, and receive my sayings,' he repeateth this admonition, not without great reason. It is a good sign of grace when any are ready to open their ears unto good counsel ; but without sticking or staying, and with delight and joy to admit and receive into the heart wholesome admonition, is a declaration of greater forwardness. Unto this degree of godliness whosoever shall attain,

shall have years of life multiplied unto him : for both here he shall live long and comfortable, seeing good days ; and hereafter shall reign with Christ eternally, inheriting everlasting glory. It is meet, yea, profitable for thee, whosoever thou art, to hearken to the exhortation of this divine instructor ; for, saith he, 'I teach thee the way of wisdom ; I lead thee by the paths of equity,' wherein he sheweth that by his precepts and admonitions he directeth and guideth every one to tread in the course of virtue, the way whereof is not crooked, nor yet offensive, as is the way of wickedness, but plain and without any stumbling block : for, as is added, if thou dost live justly and wisely, 'when thou shalt walk, thy gait shall not be strait ; and if thou shalt run, thou shalt not be hurt.' To go without stumbling, though but a soft pace, is a good thing, but to run swiftly without harm, is a harder and happier matter, seeing that he that maketh much haste seeth not commonly the danger before him. Now then, so to walk in the way of virtue as that whether a man perform his duty with leisure or speed, he meeteth with nothing that indeed can harm him, this is a great benefit and blessing. Wherefore, as followeth, 'lay hold on wisdom's instruction ; leave not off : keep her ; because she is thy life.' It is no less a virtue to keep and hold fast a good thing, than to attain or get it at the beginning. Seeing then so great fruit cometh by wisdom, that she will make thee partaker of happiness and of eternal life, lose her not through any negligence, but preserve and hold her fast unto the end, not suffering her to be plucked away from thee by any temptations or troubles whatsoever.

Ver. 14. *Enter not into the path of the wicked, neither walk in the way of evil men.*

Ver. 15. *Avoid it, go not through it, turn from it, and pass by it.*

Ver. 16. *For they sleep not, unless they have done a mischief ; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.*

Ver. 17. *For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.*

Such is the course of godliness, as before hath been described ; but as for the path of the wicked, 'Enter not into it, walk not in it, avoid it, go not through it, turn from it, and pass by it,' for it is

not good rashly to come into the place where sinners are. Their company, presence, conditions, and doings, are to be shunned, even with might and main: 'For they sleep not, unless they have done a mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.' They sin not of frailty, but of malice; not by occasion, as it were, but of an insatiable desire of committing wickedness. For as he that is earnestly bent upon any matter cannot sleep well before he hath brought his matter to pass, so the wicked, all the day long devising and wishing mischief, cannot rest till they have accomplished the same. The adulterer is unquiet till he hath satisfied his lust; the covetous person cannot be at ease till he hath got some gain to the hindrance of his neighbour. To conclude; every one that is set on doing evil museth thereon, even upon his bed, in such sort as that either he cannot sleep, or if he slumber a little, he is quickly awake. Thus the vehement desire of doing evil doth violently take away sleep, which to man is natural. The cause why these notorious wicked men are even thus hungry and thirsty after the prey, and committing of sin, is for that 'they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence;' for they will not live of honest labour, or be content with goods well gotten, but they choose rather to enrich themselves with the spoil, and to get what they can with hook and crook. Truly, there are some of so thievish a nature that they cannot but steal, and that take delight in no goods so much as those which they have gotten wrongfully.

Ver. 18. *For the path of every righteous man is like the glistering light, which proceedeth to shine, so that he is steadfast in the day.*

Ver. 19. *But the way of the wicked is like the darkness; they know not where they shall stumble.*

These verses, containing a reason why the way of the wicked is to be shunned, declare the difference between the state of the godly and of the ungodly; to the end, that by the odds between their conditions, it may appear how good a thing it is to walk in the paths of equity. As the light of the morning is glorious, and continueth, yea, increaseth in brightness; even so the state and life of the godly is full of blessings and excellent ornaments. For they do not only proceed from virtue to

virtue, neither only receive from the Lord many outward blessings in this life; but as stars in the firmament send forth their light and beauty, so they shall shine hereafter with grace and glory. Wherefore, as the prophet Hosea speaketh, 'if we shall seek to know the Lord, his arising will be like to the rising of the morning, and he will come down upon us, as the former and latter rain upon the earth.' This doctrine was not first taught by Solomon; but the God of Israel spake unto me, saith David, touching the just, 'that they shall be as when the sun ariseth in the bright morning,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 4, or as the tender grass springeth out of the ground in a clear morning after the sun shine. Most sure and certain then it is, that every just man is steadfast in the day. If any walketh in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world, saith our Saviour Christ. Now he that loveth his brother remaineth in the light, and there is no stumbling-block in him, saith the apostle John, chap. xi. 9. Wherefore, he that practiseth righteousness, having God's word and mercy shining before him, must needs stand upright without falling, as being in the day, 1 John ii. 10; for the elect are children of the day, that is, of blessing and salvation, and not of the night, or of misery and damnation, as the apostle Paul testifieth to the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. v. 5. Happy then is the state of the godly, and like unto light; but woeful is the condition of the wicked, and may fitly be resembled to the mist or darkness; for as darkness is uncomfortable, and doth deprive men of sight and ability to espy and prevent dangers, so the life of the ungodly is full of miseries, and subject to calamities, which it neither can discern nor escape. Hereby it cometh to pass that they are ignorant when and upon what they shall fall and rush. God's judgments so overtake them on a sudden, that they are overthrown with them at unawares: 'So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love thee be as the sun when it marcheth on his strength,' Judges v. 31.

Ver. 20. *My son, hearken unto my words; incline thine ears unto my sayings.*

Ver. 21. *Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them within thine heart.*

Ver. 22. *For they are life unto those that find*

*them, and wholesome to the whole flesh of every one of them.*

Before that new instructions are declared by him, the spiritual father thinketh it good again and again to prepare his son. He first demandeth an attentive ear, saying, 'My son, incline thine ears unto my sayings;' for the ear is the door, at the which knowledge doth especially enter; and faith, as the apostle speaketh, cometh by hearing. Secondly, He requireth a watchful eye: 'Let them not depart from thine eyes;' for if the eye be not sanctified and careful, as well as the ear, virtue will easily depart, and vice come in place thereof. Thirdly, He claimeth also a faithful heart: 'Keep them within thine heart;' for if the soul be not reformed, as well as the outward senses, or resigned, as it were, to the Lord, the seed of the word must needs be lost. Great cause there is to hearken to the doctrines of the Scripture: 'For they are life unto those that find them, and wholesome to the whole flesh of every one of them.' Whosoever obey the word of God shall thereby be preserved in soul and body from many miseries, and in them both taste many good blessings.

*Ver. 23. Above all watch and ward keep thine heart; for out of it proceed the issues of life.*

Nature itself in the body of man hath so fenced the heart on every side, whereupon this life chiefly dependeth, and from whence it floweth to the other parts, that by the very placing of it, it seemeth to be a most noble entrail, whereof chief regard is to be had. The heart then is with all care and diligence to be preserved from hurt and from infection, but especially from sin and from damnation. Hence it is that the Lord in Deuteronomy, chap. iv. 9, willeth his people to look to themselves and to their souls diligently, meaning that this is to be done even above all watch and ward, as here it is said; for it is not enough to free the soul from sin, or to furnish it with the gifts of God's Spirit, but this is to be done with greater care and diligence than anything else. Rather, then, look to the cleansing of thine heart, than to the cleansing of thy well; rather look to the feeding of thine heart, than to the feeding of thy flock; rather look to the defending of thine heart, than to the defending of thine house; finally, rather look to the keeping of thine heart,

than to the keeping of thy money. Great cause there is why thou shouldst have this special regard of thine heart, 'for out of it proceed the issues of life.' A man may be maimed, blind, dumb, and lame, and yet live, yea, enter into God's kingdom. But seeing the heart is not only the well-spring of motion and sense, but of infidelity and faith, if that be unsound, especially to God-ward, death, even eternal death, must of necessity follow. Whereas, then, out of the heart floweth all sin, and the heart is the seat again of God's Spirit, 'above all watch and ward look to thine heart;' for what would it gain a man to win the whole world, and to lose his own soul?

*Ver. 24. Remove from thee the frowardness of the mouth, and put far away from thee the naughtiness of the lips.*

After that we have been exhorted to look to our hearts, we are now, not without cause, willed to put evil speaking from us; for there is no member in our whole body more hurtful than the tongue, if it break the bridle, or abuse itself in speeches. All the vices of the tongue being comprehended in these two words, frowardness and naughtiness, we are herein charged to take heed of blasphemy, lying, perjury, cursing, jesting, slandering, and infinite other such deformities of the mouth and of the lips. He is a very wise man that offendeth not at all in his tongue; but to abuse our speech to vanity and lewdness, were as indecent as if any, when he goeth abroad, should draw his mouth or lips awry.

*Ver. 25. Let thine eyes look directly on afore, and let thine eyelids view straight before thee.*

To take heed to the way, and to look on straight before, are properties of a wary and circumspect man, Eph. v. 15. We are then herein exhorted to walk circumspectly, not as the unwise, but as the wise, redeeming the time. We must, as the common proverb is, look before we leap, and have our eyes in our head, wherein they are placed, as in a watch-tower, to direct the whole body, and to foresee all dangers. But we are not to think that Solomon would only direct the eyes of the body, but that he would have the eyes of the mind also do their duty, and always be bent upon that which is good, and watchful in foreseeing all dangers. How perilous a thing it is to look awry, and not to have

the eyes of the head and heart continually attentive on God's commandment, and our own good, the example of Lot's wife may sufficiently testify.

Ver. 26. *Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be ordered aright.*

A wise traveller doth diligently examine what way he is to go, and if there be two paths, whereof he doubteth whether is the right, he will weigh with himself which of them it is best for him to take; even so it is meet that every one, by the balance and weights of equity and justice, do ponder his affections, and the means which he useth to bring anything to pass, that he may know whether they be lawful or not, and if he find them to be amiss, then he must alter and correct them. Every one is to make such straight paths to his feet, not only for his own welfare, but for the good of others, lest that which is lame, be, by a rough and crooked way of an offensive example, even turned quite out of joint, Heb. xii. 13, whenas rather it should be healed.

Ver. 27. *Turn not to the right hand or to the left: remove thy foot from evil.*

This phrase of declining to the right hand or to the left is often used in the Scripture. The Lord in Deuteronomy speaketh thus to the people of Israel: 'You shall take heed that ye do as the Lord God commandeth you; see that ye decline not either to the right hand or to the left,' Deut. v. 32. We must then walk not only by measure, but, as it were, by line, yea, by a straight line. We are not by any means to start aside from the truth of God's word, either for love, or fear, or any such affection; but abhorring that which is evil, we are to cleave constantly to that which is good. Let then every one take heed that neither he be of the number of those dissolute people that make no conscience of anything, nor of the company of those fantastical professors who will needs be, as Nazianzen speaketh, more straight than the rule, more bright than the sun, more right-handed than the right hand itself; for although the very Spirit of Christ, which is known by the mortifying of sin, doth apparently work in divers members of our congregations; and though the best divines in Christendom, and most famous, not only for their writings, but godliness, acknowledge our assemblies to be the churches of Christ; yet all this, and much more, cannot satisfy them, nor

stay them from separating themselves from us and condemning us, as if they themselves were of better judgment than the very lights of the world, or were led with a more excellent spirit than the Spirit of Christ himself. What is this, but either through zeal without knowledge to decline on the right hand, in seeking after more excellent things than are; or through unadvised rashness to turn too much on the left hand, in condemning those things as utterly unholy, which only are imperfect? whenas that which is lame is not by such rough and offensive ways to be put quite out of joint, but rather by the plasters of patience, charity, wisdom, and a life un-reprovable, to be healed.

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## CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1. *My son, hearken unto my wisdom, bow down thine ear unto mine understanding:*

Ver. 2. *That thou mayest observe counsel, and thy lips may preserve knowledge.*

The drift of the divine instructor in this chapter is to dissuade every one from the foul sin of adultery. It containeth two principal points: the one, an admonition to avoid all fellowship with the adulteress; the other, an exhortation to use the means of chastity. Before that the wise father cometh to give his son his lesson, he useth a preface to draw him to attention, saying, 'My son, hearken unto my wisdom, bow down thine ear to mine understanding: that thou mayest observe counsel, and thy lips may preserve knowledge.'—that is, stir up and apply thy mind and affections, and bend the outward senses also of thy body, to the end that thou mayest neither conceive in mind, nor willingly hear any evil or vanity; and to the end also that thou mayest have the word of God in thy mouth, that thy lips may be fenced against the lips of the harlot, which allure unto lewdness.

Ver. 3. *Albeit the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and the roof of her mouth is softer than oil:*

Ver. 4. *Yet her latter end is bitter as wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged sword.*

Ver. 5. *Her feet go down to death; her steps go down to the grave.*

Ver. 6. *She pondereth not the way of life; her paths are moveable, she hath no knowledge.*<sup>1</sup>

In these verses the harlot is very lively painted forth in her colours, to the end she may be not only the better known, but the more detested. 'Albeit the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and the roof of her mouth is softer than oil: yet her latter end is bitter as wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged sword.' Although the naughty woman's words are pleasant to flesh and blood, inasmuch as they tickle the senses with promise of joys and delights, so that they may be compared to the honeycomb, which is most sweet to the taste; and although her speeches are most plausible and smooth, so that they may be resembled to the oil, which hurteth not the tenderest skin, but rather supplieth the veins and sinews; yet for all this, her effects are most grievous to be borne, so that they may be likened very fitly to wormwood, which exceedeth in bitterness; and the evils which at last she bringeth men unto are most deadly, so that they may justly be called a two-edged sword; for howsoever at the beginning she bringeth solace or comfort, and telleth that her lover may be secure and free of all fear of danger or trouble, yet in the end she worketh unto him shame, beggary, heart-grief, destruction, and damnation, as afterward shall more plainly appear. 'Her feet go down to death; her steps go down to the grave.' Such are her speeches and lips, as they before have been described. Now as touching her feet and steps, they lead unto misery and utter ruin, so that they which go with her, or follow her, are sure to meet with most heavy judgments, and most fearful plagues, which the Lord hath prepared for her and her companions; for fornicators and adulterers the Lord will judge. To conclude: 'She pondereth not the way of life; her paths are moveable, she hath no knowledge.' By reason that people regard not the good way of

<sup>1</sup> In this sense I take this verse, which before I liked well, but I was then loath to vary from the common translators; but the words well bearing this interpretation, I thought good now to set it down. The only objection against it with a show of reason may be, that *pen* doth not signify *to* in the Scripture. But Rabbi Jonah so turneth *pen* both here and Isa. xxvii. 3. And David Kimbi readeth *pen* by way of interrogation, for *num* in Latin, which in effect is all one with *non* or *lo*.

virtue and wisdom, which bringeth life before spoken of, they run into all vices. This the harlot careth not for, and therefore though she live, yet she is dead, because that, being wanton, she wanteth God's Spirit, which is the life of the soul. Hence it cometh to pass that her paths are moveable; so that now she is without, now she is in the streets, and she lieth in wait in every corner, as is afterward affirmed in this book, chap. vii. 12. Finally, she knoweth nothing as she ought to know, neither can come to the full knowledge of the truth unto her salvation. For, as also is afterward set down in the ninth chapter of this book, though the foolish woman is full of words and babbling, yet for all that she knoweth nothing, being so blind that she doth not effectually see either the fulness of her sin, or the misery of her estate, or the way to God's kingdom; for truly, whosoever hath not God's grace is blind, not seeing things afar off, even those spiritual and heavenly duties and virtues wherewith God is well pleased, and which he hath prepared that we should walk therein, 2 Pet. i. 9.

Ver. 7. *Now therefore, O sons, hearken unto me, and depart not from the words of my mouth.*

Ver. 8. *Put thy way far off from her, and draw not near to the door of her house:*

Ver. 9. *Lest thou give thine honour unto other, and thy years to the cruel:*

Ver. 10. *Lest strangers be filled with thy riches, and thy labours be in another man's house:*

Ver. 11. *And thou mourn at the last, after that thy body and flesh have been consumed.*

Ver. 12. *And say, How have I hated instruction, and my soul despised correction;*

Ver. 13. *And have not hearkened to the voice of my teachers, and not inclined mine ear to mine instructors!*

Ver. 14. *Within a little space I am in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.*

In these verses the spiritual father both admonisheth his son to use certain means whereby he may be preserved from adultery, and allegeth sundry reasons tending to dissuade him from this sin. One means of avoiding the allurements of the strumpet, is listening to good counsel, or the word of God contained in the first of these sentences: 'Now therefore, O sons, hearken unto me.' Another is,

the shunning of the place where she dwelleth and keepeth: 'Put thy way far off from her, and draw not near to the door of her house;' for, indeed, as it is in our common proverb,

'He that will no evil do,  
Must do nothing that longeth<sup>1</sup> thereto.'

Men will shun a house infected with the pestilence, much more then is the dwelling-place of the harlot to be avoided, who is infinitely more contagious and dangerous than any plague. The first reason set down to dissuade men from passing by the way wherein the adulteress keepeth is, 'Lest thou give thine honour to other;' lest by this means thou not only lose the flower of thy beauty and dignity, but give it unto a harlot to enjoy, becoming one flesh with her. The second reason is, 'Lest thou give thy years to the cruel;' lest thou by this means not only, through insatiable lust, shorten thy days, but, incurring the fierce wrath of the naughty woman's husband, or of some revenger, be cruelly cut off, even before the natural course of thy life be expired. The third cause is, 'Lest strangers be filled with thy riches, and thy labours be in another man's house;' lest also, like the prodigal son, thou not only spend thy patrimony upon harlots, bawds, ruffians, and ill companions, but enrich them even with that, thy substance, which thou hast got by the toil and labour of thine hands, and earned dearly with the sweat of thy brow. The last argument is, 'Lest thou mourn at the last day that thy flesh and body have been consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my soul despised correction, and have not hearkened to the voice of my teachers; nor inclined mine ear to mine instructors! within a little space I am in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.' Finally, Lest thou not only receive the punishment of wanting so many good things as have been rehearsed, but of feeling sorrow, and many evils joined therewithal; and so, when it is too late, thou howl and cry, as the beasts which are stricken, or drawn to be slain, whenas now thy vital spirits have been spent, and thy carcase hath been plagued with some sore disease, and speak after this manner: O unwise and most miserable wretch that I am, how fond and mad have I been in former times, so little to regard

<sup>1</sup> That is, 'belongeth.'—ED.

the good counsel of my parents, who wished my good, and of the Lord's prophets, who reproved my sin! What cause had I to be so stubborn to them, or to rage against them? For if I had obeyed them, I should never have lost those good things that I had, nor have felt the miseries that have justly come upon me. But because I have cast their precepts behind my back, I am made suddenly an open spectacle of shame and vengeance, in place of arraignment and execution before the bench and common people. These reasons then, taken from human damages, are very forcible and sufficient, not only to dissuade men from adultery, but from coming near to the house of the adulteress.

Ver. 15. *Drink water out of thine own cistern, and flowing streams out of the midst of thine own well.*

Ver. 16. *Let thy fountains disperse themselves abroad, thy streams of waters in the streets.*

Ver. 17. *Let them be thine in several, and not other men's with thee.*

Ver. 18. *Let thy well-spring be blessed: and rejoice in the wife of thy youth.*

Ver. 19. *Let her be a most lovely hind, and a most amiable roe.*

Ver. 20. *Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and dote in the love of her continually.*

Oftentimes in the Scripture the estate and use of wedlock is shadowed out by the allegory or borrowed speech of waters, Num. xxiv. 7; Deut. xxxiii. 28; Isa. xlviii. 1; Ps. lxxviii. 27; Isa. li. 1. If, then, the self-same thing is here also, by similitudes, represented, in which opinion divines and Hebricians of most excellent judgment are, this is the natural sense of this place: Quench the thirst of thy desire, not by abusing those that belong to other, but by enjoying thine own wife, even as it is meet that one having a well or pit of his own should drink thereof, and not of another man's. The fruit of this lawful course will be sweet and great, for thou shalt have children begotten in honest wedlock, of whom thou mayest be sure that they are thine own, and which may be an ornament to the commonwealth, and a refreshing to thee in the streets of the city. Let, therefore, thy wife become a fruitful vine, and, forsaking all other, keep thyself only to her, and delight in her. But if these words and verses be more largely understood of the use and right dis-

posing of riches before spoken of—which interpretation pleaseth some, and seemeth to them the fittest—then they carry this meaning, which to add to the former exposition I judge it in this case no more inconvenient than it is for mariners to set up a full sail in their boats when they see the wind to move them so to do. ‘Drink water out of thine own cistern, and flowing streams out of the midst of thine own well.’ Enjoy comfortably, and apply to thine own behoof, thy corn, thy wine, thine oil, and all thy goods; for by one possession here named as most necessary and usual, to wit, water, every one in this sense is to be understood. It was the custom of the Jews commonly to drink water, for which cause every one almost had his own proper wells, and pits, and cisterns. ‘Let thy fountains disperse themselves abroad, thy streams of water in the streets.’ Not only take part of thy goods thyself, but impart them to other who stand in need, as to the fatherless, the widow, the beggar in the street. ‘Let them be thine in several, and not other men’s with thee.’ Let not bawds and harlots have any part of them or interest in them, but keep thou to thyself alone the right and power of them. ‘Let thy well-spring be blessed.’ To conclude; give thy goods to those that are in need so plentifully that the Lord may increase them, and the poor may bless thee for them. Thus far reach those sentences which are dark, of the true meaning whereof let the servants and prophets of the Lord judge. As for the verses that follow, they are more plain and without controversy, and to be understood of the duties of husbands towards their wives. ‘And rejoice in the wife of thy youth.’ Live cheerfully with her whom the Lord hath first matched with thee, as most naturally loving and to be loved. ‘Let her be a most lovely hind, and a most amiable roe.’ Even as the hart, being fond of the hind, followeth her up and down, and solaceth himself with her, or as the roebuck, being exceedingly enamoured with the roe, delighteth in her, and wandereth with her; so walk, talk, and refresh thyself with the wife of thy youth, being not bitter, but most kind and loving unto her all the days of thy life. ‘Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and dote in the love of her continually.’ Finally, even as the little infant contenteth himself with the breasts of his mother or

nurse, or as they who are stricken in years dote greatly on those things which they like; so, being satisfied with her alone, and not offended with any of her wants or infirmities, think her the most beautiful of all other, and as a peerless pearl in thine eye let her be most acceptable unto thee.

Ver. 21. *And why, O my son, shouldst thou go astray with a strange woman, or embrace the bosom of another man’s wife?*

Ver. 22. *Since every man’s ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his paths.*

Ver. 23. *His own iniquities shall take the wicked man, and he shall be held by the cords of his own sin.*

Ver. 24. *He shall die for want of instruction, and for that he wandereth in his great folly.*

In this conclusion of the chapter, the Spirit of God addeth a divine reason, dissuading from adultery, unto those human, which before have already been set down to this intent: ‘And why, O my son, shouldst thou go astray with a strange woman?’ Great cause there is why thou shouldst fly all liking of other woman besides thine own wife, and why thou shouldst not be so bold as to come near to a harlot: ‘Since every man’s ways are before the eyes of the Lord;’ inasmuch as God plainly seeth the most secret actions that are done; yea, the very inward cogitations of the heart. ‘And he pondereth all his paths;’ yea, since the eternal God examineth all the deeds and thoughts of men, and judgeth them in justice. ‘His own iniquity shall take the wicked man.’ Wherefore, howsoever for a time the ungodly person, or adulterer may go abroad freely, or be out of trouble, yet his own sin, as a bailiff or sergeant, shall at the last arrest and apprehend him; for his conscience shall check him, and summon him before the tribunal seat of God. ‘And he shall be held by the cords of his own sin.’ Moreover, the troubles of the Lord raised up by his transgressors shall, as jailers, bind him with such bonds or irons, as it were, that he cannot possibly escape, being kept together with the evil angels in chains of darkness against the day of judgment. ‘He shall die for want of instruction.’ At the last death and destruction, as the Lord’s executioners, shall take away his life from him, yea, they shall torment him in hell-fire.<sup>1</sup> Now all this shall befall

<sup>1</sup>See a like saying, Job xxxvi. 12.



him for want of instruction, for his ignorance, carelessness, and disobedience, as also for that he goeth astray with the strange woman, or committeth many like abominations.

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## CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1. *My son, if thou hast promised to be surety to thy friend, or clapped thine hand with a stranger,*

Ver. 2. *Thou hast ensnared thyself by the words of thy mouth, thou art caught by the speeches of thy mouth.*

Ver. 3. *Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, inasmuch as thou art come into the hand of thy neighbour; go thy way, submit thyself, and be importunate with thy neighbour.*

Ver. 4. *Grant no sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids.*

Ver. 5. *Deliver thyself as a roe out of the hand of the hunter, and as a bird out of the hand of the fowler.*

Many precepts are delivered in this book which appertain to matters of this life, and are needful for the leading of this life the more prosperously and comfortably, to the end we may the more freely apply ourselves to wisdom, and serve the Lord the more acceptably. Among divers of this sort, this concerning suretyship is not of the least use and profit, inasmuch as many, by rash incurring of debt, do undo themselves and their families, so that not only hereby it often cometh to pass that their minds are much distracted, but that their bodies are imprisoned, and the things which they possess are taken away. The apostle Paul, considering what a hindrance every way such running into debt must needs be to them that fear God, willeth all Christians to owe nothing to any man, as much as in them lieth, but to love one another, Rom. xiii. 8. Likewise here Solomon, to the end that his son should be without care and unnecessary trouble, counselleth him in these verses, first, Not to enter into suretyship, then if, peradventure, this way he hath overshot himself, to use all good means of getting his word or bond released; wherefore he saith, 'My son, if thou hast promised to be surety to thy friend, or clapped thine hand with a stranger, thou hast ensnared thyself by

the words of thy mouth, thou art caught by the speeches of thy mouth.' The wise king doth not simply or altogether forbid suretyship in these words as a thing unlawful; for as charity bindeth us sometimes to lend our goods to our neighbour, so also to become surety for him. The apostle Paul himself, who gave the precept before named, to owe nothing beside love, yet offered himself to be surety unto Philemon for Onesimus, Philem. 19, which he would not have done, if it had been unlawful for him so to do. Only, then, the danger of suretyship is here shewed, to the end that none should easily or rashly cast himself thereinto. The spiritual father reasoneth thus: Seeing suretyship is, as it were, a snare or a dangerous net, enter not into it rashly or lightly, and put not thine head voluntarily, like an unwise woodcock, into the gin that will take thee to destruction. But if any, through a yielding nature or unadvised speech, have so cast himself into suretyship as that he hath, either by clapping of the hand or by promise, bound himself to pay his friend's debt, what is he then to do? Then, 'Do this now my son, and deliver thyself, inasmuch as thou art come into the hand of thy neighbour; go thy way, submit thyself, and be importunate with thy neighbour. Grant no sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. Deliver thyself as a roe out of the hand of the hunter, or as a bird out of the snare of the fowler.' Lest this snare entrap thee, or be hurtful to thee or thine, inasmuch as thou art fallen into it, do thine endeavour to be delivered out of it. Sit not still, but trot up and down, and in most humble manner earnestly request the creditor to be favourable to thee in releasing thee, or in letting thee alone. Secondly, Run to thy friend for whom thou wast surety, and press him to pay his own debt, whereunto he is principally bound. Delay in this case is not good; wherefore before thou goest to bed, or takest any rest, with all speed and diligence seek to make thyself free. It were a shame for thee, induced with reason, not to shift or provide so well for thyself as brutish creatures do for themselves. As, therefore, the beasts labour by all means to escape the pursuit which is made after them, or as the fowls strive to get out of the nets wherein they are entangled, so endeavour thou with might and main to come out of the bonds of suretyship.

Ver. 6. *Go to the ant, O sluggard; behold her ways, and be wise:*

Ver. 7. *For she having no guide, taskmaster, nor ruler,*

Ver. 8. *Prepareth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in harvest.*

Ver. 9. *How long wilt thou lie, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?*

Ver. 10. *By a few sleeps, a few slumbers, a little folding of the hands to sleep, (or rest.)*

Ver. 11. *Thy poverty cometh on thee in the mean season as a speedy traveller, and thy necessity as an armed man.*

It were a shame, saith a philosopher, not to learn virtue from the example of the little creatures.<sup>1</sup> To the self-same purpose writeth the divine instructor in this place of Scripture; for now, intending to draw men from slothfulness, as before from suretyship, he setteth before them the example of the ant, which may be a pattern of great industry and labour. She taketh such pains, that all day long she carrieth grains of corn, which are even greater than her body. Again, she hath such a forecast, by a certain natural instinct, that in summer she provideth for winter, and in harvest hideth and treasureth up food against a hard time. The sluggard, then, may well learn by her example to be diligent and provident; and it may be said unto him, even to his confusion, 'Go to the ant, O sluggard.' The praise of the ant is by so much the greater, for that 'she, having no guide, taskmaster, nor ruler, prepareth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in harvest;' for if some schoolmaster had taught her, or some overseer did call her to account, or, finally, if there were any magistrate to punish her when she did amiss, it were the less marvel that she is so painful and careful. But seeing, when she hath no director or governor, she is yet so provident and diligent, whenas the sluggish man, having magistrates and masters to direct and correct him, is so idle and reckless, great cause there is why, as he should be confounded and ashamed, so she the more commended and extolled. Solomon having thus propounded the example of the ant, as if that he stood hard by the sluggard, crieth out, 'How long wilt thou lie, O sluggard, when wilt thou arise out

of thy sleep? By a few sleeps, a few slumbers, a little folding of the hands to sleep, thy poverty cometh on thee in the mean season as a speedy traveller, and thy necessity as an armed man.' The time which the slothful person spendeth in lying in his bed, and in sleeping, is very long and much, for he doth not rise commonly till it be noon, or at least till it be very late. But yet he, thinking this long time short, excuseth himself, saying that he would sleep and slumber but a little, and stretch out his limbs but a while longer. Thus whilst he multiplieth his naps and slumberings, want overtaketh him, as a swift traveller doth one who walketh slowly, and need meeteth with him as an armed man doth one without a weapon, that is not able to withstand him. Necessity, as we say, hath no law, and poverty maketh the old wife to trot. Not to have a crumb of bread, or a drop of drink, or any necessaries of this life, is a miserable thing. A man in this case must beg, which is shameful, or starve, which is intolerable, or steal, which is abominable. When such want and need shall not befall a man by casualty, but be incurred by carelessness and negligence, it is not only a cross, but a fearful curse of God. As, then, thou wouldst be loath to come to extreme beggary, so shun slothfulness, the highway thereunto.

Ver. 12. *The lawless person, the wicked man, walketh with a froward heart.*

Ver. 13. *He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he instructeth with his fingers;*

Ver. 14. *Wily imaginations are within his heart, he practiseth mischief continually; he stirreth up contentions.*

Ver. 15. *Therefore shall his destruction come speedily; he shall suddenly be broken without recovery.*

A notorious wicked man is herein partly described and partly threatened. First, He is called a lawless person, because he will not be subject to the yoke either of God's law or of man's law, but giveth over himself to all such impieties and iniquities as the statutes and decrees of all well-ordered countries do forbid and grievously punish. For the Hebrew word Belial, (which with the best writers I translate lawless,) in the use which it hath in the Scriptures and good writers, noteth out an ungracious and disorderly person, who shaketh the law of heaven

<sup>1</sup>Seneca, lib. x. de Clementia.

from his neck. We call such a one in our English tongue, one that is past all grace, an unthrift, a devil incarnate. If any would know to what sort of sinners this name of the sons of Belial is attributed in the Scriptures, it is manifest that they are termed thereby who are either notable idolaters, or given over to gross vices, and to work all unrighteousness, even with greediness. Moses in Deuteronomy, speaking of false prophets or seducers, saith to the people of Israel, 'If any of the sons of Belial have gone out of thee, and have drawn aside the inhabitants of their city, saying, Come, let us go and worship strange gods; when thou hast inquired and sought, and well searched this out, if this abomination be committed in the midst of thee; thou shalt in any case smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword,' Deut. xiii. 13. Hannah, being charged by Eli the priest with the vice of drunkenness, and of beastly behaviour in God's church, going about to excuse herself, answered him, saying, 'Account not, I pray thee, thine handmaid as a daughter of Belial,' 1 Sam. i. 16. Such a lawless person as is a son or daughter of Belial must needs be a reprobate; 'For what concord,' saith the apostle to the Corinthians, 'is there between Christ and Belial?' 2 Cor. vi. 15. By all these places of Scripture it appeareth, that Belial noteth out in the word of God always either Satan himself, or the child of the devil, cast out of the Lord's favour and vowed to perdition. Now in the second place, that bad one whom the Spirit of God would mark out as a notorious malefactor, is called a wicked man, or the man of iniquity. The word used in the original text, which is *aven*, signifieth commonly in the Scripture such unrighteousness as worketh some hurt or vexation. Wherefore he is said to be a man of iniquity, who not only is full of all sorts of sins, but is very harmful withal, and troublesome unto his neighbours. For example, when you see any that is a promoter, a pursuer of good men, a sower of discord, a disturber of the church or commonwealth, or a causer of slaughter, you may justly call him a man of iniquity. For he that is such a one goeth about those things which not only are forbidden by God's laws, but joined with the wronging and injuring of men. All the chief poison of this serpent is in his tongue, in regard whereof it is said of him that he

walketh with a froward mouth; whereby is meant, as the prophet speaketh in the psalm, that his mouth is full of cursing, deceit, and guile, and that labour and affliction, or iniquity, is under his tongue, Ps. x. 7. Daily experience teacheth, that wheresoever such a wicked man as hath been described walketh, or is conversant, he blasphemeth, curseth, sweareth, or abuseth his tongue unto some hurt or other. Now if this wicked man had but this one bad property alone, that he did what harm he could with his mouth, although this were much to be detested, yet it were the more tolerable, if likewise he did not abuse all the other members of his body unto deceit and mischief. But behold, he hath not only one ill property, but many, if not all; neither doth he give over his mouth alone unto unrighteousness, but his eyes, his feet, his fingers, and consequently all his members and senses: for he winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he instructeth with his fingers. It is not unlawful by signs to express the secret meaning of the heart, or to admonish any to take heed of evil. Orators may use the eloquence of the body, as they call it, and they that be dumb must needs speak by gestures. When Zacharias, that divine sacrificer, was taken speechless, Luke i. 62, his godly friends and kinsfolks by signs demanded of him how he would have his son called, whereunto he answered by signs again. But to abuse the members of the body to be signs of lewdness, of cozening, of deceit, this is abominable, and this is that which here is reprov'd. There is some place and time wherein the wicked man dare not, or is loath to speak, wherein yet he is desirous that his fellows in mischief should know his mind; then and there he winketh wiles with his eye, or treadeth his companion on the foot, or pointeth closely with his finger, or maketh some privy sign or other. The prophet David, in a certain psalm, complaineth of such winkers and hypocrites, saying to the Lord, 'O Lord, let them not wink with the eye that hate me without cause; for they speak not peace, but devise deceit against those that are peaceable in the earth, Ps. xxxv. 19, 20. The son of Syrach, whom I may call a good interpreter of this book of the Proverbs, painteth out the dissembler here spoken of in his colours. 'He that winketh with the eye (saith he) imagineth mischief; but he

that hath knowledge will depart from him. In thy presence he will keep under his mouth, and will shew admiration of thy speeches; but at last he will pervert thy talk, and work thee some stumbling-block for thy words. I have heard many things, but I have not compared anything to him, and the Lord hateth him,' Eccus. xxvii. 22-25. Now seeing this detestable dissembler is such a one, no marvel if Solomon afterward in this book affirmeth, Prov. x. 10, that he is of the number of those who pervert their ways, and opposeth him to the plain-dealing man who walketh uprightly. But of all the winkers and sign-makers in the world at this day, the mass priests do excel, who to cozen the people, and to make them believe that they are most devout and holy, when there is as much religion in them as in horses, dance such high the gays with their feet, frame such figures with their fingers, and cast such countenances on the matter, at what time they are holloing, tossing, and worshipping their meally god, as that they may seem not only to be practisers, but masters of the art of dissimulation. But to conclude; as fishes are known by their eyes and gills, whether they be good or evil, so are men discerned by their looks and gestures; for the disposition of the mind is seen in the estate of the body, and the motion of the body is, as it were, a voice of the mind. Wherefore let every one be careful that he govern aright all the senses and parts of his body, and frame his gestures into modesty, comeliness, and sincerity. But such as is the disposition of the mind within, such will be the outward behaviour and carriage of a man's self. No marvel then that it is further said of the wicked man, that 'wily imaginations are in his heart, and that he imagineth or practiseth mischief continually.' In which words the very entrails of the ungodly person are ripped up, wherein is nothing else but deceit and mischief; for as an artificer deviseth and maketh new fashions of garments, so he inventeth and practiseth evil. He cometh in sheep's clothing like a lamb, but inwardly he is a ravening wolf. The thoughts of man's heart are only evil continually, but from time to time to devise and work iniquity even with delight, this is a badge of one that is unregenerate. Now to conclude; the very car-mark, as it were, whereby the ungodly person hitherto pointed unto and painted

out, may especially be known, is, that he stirreth up contentions: for what worse property can there be, than to be a makebate, or who would not judge him to be a limb of the devil, who by backbiting or tale-carrying soweth the seeds of strife? Well, seeing the lawless person and the man of Belial is thus full of all iniquity, and seeing he taketh away concord from among men, which is the chiefest good thing in this life, 'therefore shall his destruction come speedily; he shall suddenly be broken without recovery.' Great sins have great punishments; neither only great, but sudden. The day of judgment shall at last utterly overthrow the sinner, but sometimes also even in this life he is overwhelmed with a flood of calamities, which in great heaps come on him unawares. There may be a breaking which may be repaired, and a wound which may be remedied; but the ruin of the sower of contention shall be an utter undoing of him in his estate, name, body, and soul; for the Lord will quickly overthrow him, and plague him most grievously, who, as it followeth, hateth sundry vices, but especially abhorreth the stirring up of strife among brethren.

Ver. 16. *These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, these seven are abomination to his soul:*

Ver. 17. *The haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and the hands that shed innocent blood,*

Ver. 18. *A heart that plotteth wicked devices, feet that be swift in running to mischief,*

Ver. 19. *A false witness that forgeth lies, and him that raiseth up contentions among brethren.*

We are taught in these verses that albeit the Lord abhorreth all sorts of sins; yet there are some particular vices which he, after a special sort, detesteth, and useth most severely to revenge. The Lord hath no soul, as man; but to declare that he doth not lightly, but fully, and as it were inwardly, detest and loathe the sins here specified, he is said to abhor them in his soul. The things most odious unto God are in order these: first, The haughty eyes. The eyes of the body lifted up above measure, or abased to shew contempt, as signs of a proud person, are abominable in God's sight; and how much more then the eyes of the mind searching into matters that are too high, and thinking that they see most clearly when they are most blind. Mark this, you proud peacocks of the world, that

boast so much of your gifts or virtues, and take such a pride in your beauty or apparel. Shall dust and ashes be thus puffed up, and rise up in pride and presumption; and will not God, think you, cast you down, as he did the builders of the tower of Babel, or humble you, as he did Nebuchadnezzar, or plague you, as he did Herod? The second abomination is, The lying tongue. Falsehood is most contrary to God, who is truth; and God hath given to man his tongue, that he may express that by his mouth which he hath conceived in his heart. Wherefore they greatly abuse the gift of God, who use it to cover falsehood or to utter untruths. So did Ananias and Sapphira, but death was their reward. The third is, The hands that shed innocent blood. Our hands were given us to help ourselves, and others that stand in need of our aid, or are wronged. If then any shall so abuse his hands as that he shall not only hurt, but murder his innocent neighbour, he must of necessity be a great sinner, and his sin must needs appear heinous in God's sight; for innocent blood crieth for vengeance to heaven, from whence it cannot but pull down God's heavy judgments on him who hath shed it without cause, as may appear in the history of Cain and Abel. The fourth is, The heart that plotteth wicked devices. There is no man's heart but hath evil thoughts; but of purpose and malice to devise mischief, this is a property, as before hath been affirmed, of a very wicked man. Whenas then the heart shall be such a shop, as it were, of devilish policies and practices, God, which judgeth men especially according to their intents and inward affections and cogitations, not only abhorreth it, but will punish it most severely. Thus the Lord, beginning at the scornful eyes, will proceed to the lying tongue, and so to the bloody hands, and from them to the corrupt heart, till at last he descend and come to the feet, which are swift to run unto mischief, wherein the fifth abomination is contained. Such is the frailty of the flesh that it is an easy and common thing to slide into sin, or to be drawn to do that which is evil. But with great desire, and swiftness of affection and travail of body, to run or post from place to place to do some harm or villany, this is an execrable thing in God's sight, and a property of Satan. Of this sort of people were the pharisees,

who compassed sea and land to make a proselyte or a receiver of their opinions; but a woe was therefore pronounced against them by our Saviour Christ. These five sorts of sinners, who have already been spoken of, are corrupt in some part of the natural body; the other two remaining are most hurtful plagues to the body of commonwealths, and therefore no marvel if the Lord abhor them—and, namely, the false witnesses that speaketh lies, the sixth detestable person. Much hurt doth the deceitful and lying witness, for he corrupteth the judge, oppresseth the innocent, suppresseth the truth, and in the court of justice sinneth against his own soul and the Lord himself most grievously. So did the false accusers of our Saviour Christ, upon whom a perpetual brand of infamy is set in the gospel. The last detestable person here mentioned is he that maketh contention among brethren, but not the least; for he that by backbiting, ill counsel, or any other means, setteth those together by the ears that are tied in the bond of unity and amity, doth more hurt oftentimes than the murderer, inasmuch as he slayeth not only men's bodies, but their souls. Oh that this were well considered by heretics and schismatics in these days, who break the peace of the church, and divide themselves from the members of the body of Christ; and not only cast themselves into unnecessary troubles, but draw aside many into endless errors, perverting wavering professors, wounding the consciences of constant Christians, hardening the hearts of atheists, causing the chief enemies of God's grace to triumph, and offending the majesty of the Highest, howsoever they imagine they do him good service.

Ver. 20. *My son, observe thy father's commandment, and forsake not thy mother's instruction:*

Ver. 21. *Bind them alway upon thine heart, (and tie them about thy neck.*

Solomon intending in this chapter again to dissuade his son from adultery, prefixeth in these words a preface containing his advice: 'My son, observe,' &c.; my child, lay up thy parents' counsel as a most precious treasure, and keep it safely as most costly jewels.

Ver. 22. *It shall lead thee when thou walkest, it shall watch over thee when thou sleepest, it shall talk with thee when thou wakest.*

Ver. 23. *For the commandment is a lantern, (or*

lamp,) and doctrine a light, and reproofs of instruction a way of life,

Ver. 24. *To preserve thee from the naughty woman, (and) from the flattery of the strange woman's tongue.*

Herein Solomon sheweth the reasons of that his advice, which he did set down in the two verses going before. 'It shall lead thee when thou walkest;' the counsel of thy godly parents, or the word of God by them applied unto thee, shall as a guide direct thee in thy calling, actions, and journeys. 'It shall watch over thee when thou sleepest;' it will be also as a watchman to preserve thee from temptations, troubles, and dangers in the night season. 'It shall talk with thee when thou wakest;' finally, it will likewise be as a familiar friend unto thee, conferring with thee in the morning, or in the daytime, of the mercies of God, of the promises of the word, and of spiritual matters; see Ps. xii. 8. 'For the commandment is a lantern;' for the law of the Lord is as a bright lamp. see Ps. cxix. 105, which in the night season shineth in a dark chamber; inasmuch as it enjoineeth that which is good, and forbiddeth that which is evil. 'And doctrine a light;' the instruction of the word is again as the light of the sun, which in the daytime manifesteth the way which is to be gone; for in like manner the doctrine of the Scripture manifesteth truth and error. 'And reproofs of instruction a way of life;' finally, rebukes for sin, or the admonitions of God's word, are like the way or path which directly bringeth men to their journey's end, or to the place whither they would go. For as wholesome reproofs pull us from our vices, so they do hold us in our duties. 'To preserve thee from the naughty woman;' the word of God, I say, is such a sovereign preservative, as hath been spoken of, to keep thee from the adulteress, 'and from the flattery of the strange woman's tongue,' and to preserve thee from being seduced by the enticing speeches of the harlot.

Ver. 25. *Desire not her beauty in thine heart, neither let her catch thee with her eyelids.*

Now Solomon cometh to warn his son, that he be not drawn to go astray by any provocations unto unchastity. 'Desire not her beauty in thine heart;' albeit she is fair, yet look not on her to lust after her. 'Neither let her catch thee with her eyelids;' neither yet suffer her wanton or pleasant looks to be a net to entangle thee, or a fire to inflame thee.

Ver. 26. *For by a whorish woman one is brought to a morsel of bread; and the adulteress hunteth for life, which is precious.*

Two great hurts arising unto men by following after strange women are here specified, as sufficient reasons to dissuade every one from the foul sin of adultery. One is, the loss of goods: 'For by a whorish woman one is brought to a morsel of bread.' Through whoredom men come to extreme poverty: for the harlots have one part of their substance, who haunt their company; bawds and ruffians another part; officers before whom they are often convented another part; the rest consumeth through a secret curse of the Lord, and thus at last all cometh to nothing. Another mischief is, the loss of life itself: 'For the adulteress hunteth for life, which is precious.' The vile harlot not only bringeth a man to beggary, but to death and destruction, being in this respect like unto hunters, who seek after the life of the poor beast; for the adulteress seeketh by all means to draw her companion to commit folly with her, whereby it cometh to pass that he is laid open to her husband's rage, the magistrate's sword, and God's wrath. Now, because she useth craft and deceit to entangle her lovers, it is not only here said of her that she hunteth, but in the book of the Preacher, Eccles. vii. 26, that her heart is as nets and her hands as snares.

Ver. 27. *Can any take fire into his bosom, and his garments not be burned?*

Ver. 28. *Can any walk upon burning coals, and his feet not be burned?*

Ver. 29. *So is he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife: whosoever toucheth her shall not be unpunished.*

Now the wise king cometh to amplify the former reasons, which here he doth by a most fit similitude. There is great likeness between the adulteress and fire, both in the property of inflaming and consuming. 'Can any take fire in his bosom,' &c. Even as it is impossible that fire should not consume those clothes or that body which it toucheth; so it cannot be but that the adulterous woman will undo, or hurt at the least very sorely, both in outward things and in his person, him who committeth folly with her. The consideration hereof caused Job to say, from whom it is likely that Solomon took this comparison, that the sin of adultery is such a fire as would, if he had

mitted it, have consumed him unto destruction, and quite rooted out all his increase, Job xxxi. 12.

Ver. 30. *A thief is not despised who steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry;*

Ver. 31. *But if he be taken, he repayeth sevenfold; he maketh recompense with any substance of his house.*

Ver. 32. *As for him who committeth adultery with a woman he is void of understanding: he who shall do this destroyeth his own soul.*

Ver. 33. *He shall receive a blow and blame; and his reproach shall not be blotted out.*

Ver. 34. *For the fierce rage of a man is in jealousy; and he sheweth no mercy in the day of revenge.*

Ver. 35. *He hath no respect to any ransom, and he respecteth not, albeit thou profferest many gifts.*

The reasons before set down tending to dissuade from adultery are, in this conclusion of the chapter, enlarged by a comparison between the lesser sin and the greater. 'A thief is not despised who stealeth to satisfy his soul.' Albeit it is a shame to steal, yet theft is not so foul a fault as to defile another man's wife. True it is, he who did steal to preserve his life, Exod. xxii. 1, was, by the law of God, to be punished, for he was to make full restitution or to be sold; but he was not to be put to death, or to be noted with public infamy; at the least, when he had made restitution, all his discredit was to cease. 'As for him who committeth adultery with a woman,' &c. The case standeth otherwise with the adulterer, who considereth not the greatness of his sin, or of God's judgment against it, and therefore is void of understanding, for he deserveth death, and by the law of God he is to die. 'He shall receive a blow and blame; and his reproach shall not be blotted out.' He who committeth adultery shall be pursued by the whorish woman's husband unto death, and executed by the magistrate; neither only shall he live and die like a stained and spotted man, but even when he is dead, his infamy shall remain. 'For the fierce rage of a man is in jealousy.' Although effeminate persons can put up the wrong offered them in the defiling of their wives, yet those who have any manhood in them, will not, neither possibly can. Indeed, private revenge is unlawful; but the secret motions of nature will so work in this case that men will pursue those before the magistrates, even unto the death, who have done them wrong in their

chiefest treasures, which are more dear unto them than life. How true this is, may appear in the example of that Levite, of whom mention is made in the book of Judges, who, seeing his wife to have been shamefully abused, sent the parts of her dead body to the tribes of Israel with this message, 'Consider the matter, consult, and give sentence,' Judges xix. 30. To conclude, the husband which is inflamed with jealousy, or rage for wrong offered unto him in his wife, will never be reconciled nor rest till he hath been revenged of his adversary the adulterer, even unto the full. Now, if man will not pardon the offence this way done to him, how much more will God punish the transgression of his law in this case, yea, how much more severely will he revenge such villauy?

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### CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1. *My son, observe my words, and lay up my precepts within thee.*

Ver. 2. *Keep my precepts and thou shalt live; and my doctrine as the apple of thine eye.*

Ver. 3. *Bind them to thy fingers, write them on the table of thine heart.*

Ver. 4. *Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call prudence thy kinswoman.*

Ver. 5. *That she may preserve thee from the strange woman, from the adulteress who flattereth with her lips.*

This chapter, wherein Solomon still entreateth of adultery, consisteth of a preface contained in these verses, and a parable, which first is propounded, then applied in the rest of the chapter. After what manner we are to receive the word of God, the wise king sheweth first in these speeches. 'My son, observe my words,' &c. If a man have jewels, he will not cast them in every place, but he will keep them as safe as he can, under lock and key. Such carefulness would the Holy Ghost have us also use in hiding and keeping good instruction in our hearts. 'Keep my precepts, and thou shalt live; and my doctrine as the apple of thine eye.' The instruction of the word is the same to the soul, which the eye is to the body. For as the body without the sight of the eyes runneth upon many things that hurt it, and falleth at every little stumbling-block; so the soul most fearfully runneth into sins, if it want the light and direction of the word. As, therefore, we are

most careful to keep our eyes from hurt, so should we be as chary and wary to preserve the admonitions of the Scripture. When Nahash the Ammonite offered to make a covenant of peace with the children of Israel, upon condition that they would pull out their right eyes, albeit they were in great distress, yet would they not yield thereunto. In like manner then, let us not for anything in the world part with the good instructions which once we have received; yea, let us sooner part from our eyes than from them; let us rather, as is added, 'bind them to our fingers, and write them on the tables of our hearts;' let us have them, I say, at our fingers' ends, never suffering them to vanish or to perish. To this end every one is admonished, in the last place, to 'say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister,' &c. The love between brethren, sisters, and kinsfolk is very natural, and again their familiarity very great. They often feast one another, as did Job's children; and they live lovingly together, as did Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. In like sort then we are not to be strangers in the word, but we must be daily conversant therein, loving it most dearly, and following it most carefully. Thus if thou embracest and entertainest prudence, then 'she will preserve thee from the strange woman.' The sum of these words is, that forasmuch as no man by himself is able enough to take heed of the harlot, and the word of God is an only sovereign preservative against this evil, therefore it is with all diligence to be kept and regarded.

Ver. 6. *For as I looked through the window of mine house out of a casement,*

Ver. 7. *I saw among the fools, I marked among the lads, a witless youth,*

Ver. 8. *Who, passing through the street near unto her corner, went the way towards her house,*

Ver. 9. *In the twilight, at evening-tide, in the blackness of the night, and the darkness.*

Now the wise king beginneth to propound his parable, describing in these verses the foolish and wanton young man which was drawn at last to commit folly with the naughty woman. 'As I looked through the window of mine house.' They that will stand in their chambers, or look out of the windows of their houses, may hear and see many such things done and said as here are spoken of. But Solomon, through the window of his mind, did view and be-

hold the customs and behaviour of wantons. 'I saw among the fools,' &c. He considered and found by observation that some rash and ungodly youth, with whom God is angry for former sins, falleth through his own corruption into the deep pit of the mouth of the harlot at the last. 'Who passing through the street near unto her corner.' Here he would give us to understand that the vain young man, by going the way where the harlot dwelt, was brought at last to commit whoredom. 'In the twilight, at evening-tide, in the blackness of the night, and the darkness.' He considered what was done, and said, from evening to morning, and all night long, as also how the adulterer is wont to stray abroad when it is dark.

Ver. 10. *Now, behold, a woman came forth to meet him, in whorish attire, and subtle in heart.*

Ver. 11. *She is a babbler (and) stubborn: her feet abide not within her house:*

Ver. 12. *Now she is without, now in the streets, and she lieth in wait at every corner.*

The wise king having described the wanton youth proceedeth to paint out the naughty woman in her colours. 'Now,' saith he, 'behold, a woman came forth to meet him,' &c. An unmodest strumpet, light in her apparel, and cunning as well to hide her craft as to deceive, spying the wanton youth out of her house, took this occasion to tempt him unto folly. 'She is a babbler and stubborn,' &c. She hath these three ill properties: first, She is not sparing of words, but very talkative; secondly, She is not of a meek spirit, but disobedient to God and her husband, yea, very stout; last of all, She is not a house-dove, but a gadder to and fro. 'Now she is without, now in the streets.' She hath this property also, to lie in wait for the chastity of men in every place, as Tamar did when she sat in the highway to tempt Judah unto whoredom.

Ver. 13. *Then she taking hold on him, kissed him, and hardening her face, said unto him,*

Ver. 14. *I have at home sacrifices of thanksgivings: this day have I paid my vows.*

Ver. 15. *For this cause I am come forth to meet thee, whilst earnestly I seek thy face in good time I find thee.*

Those speeches of the harlot are here set down, wherein she entreateth him to sup with her. 'Then she taking hold on him, kissed him.' The whorish



woman saluteth the young man in a most bold and wanton manner, not with a holy, but with a filthy kiss. As Potiphar's wife laid hold on Joseph to stay him, so she layeth hold on the young man to draw him toward her house. 'I have at home sacrifices of thanksgiving.' Since I have very good fare at home, saith she, I pray thee, come and sup with me. God commanded in his law that when any offered peace-offerings for their prosperity, part of those sacrifices should be burnt, part given to the priest, part refused to be eaten by them who brought the same. Of this part, then, she speaketh in this place. 'For this cause I am come forth to meet thee,' &c. Here is great good-will pretended; but this love was not true love indeed, because none can love his neighbour aright, but he which loveth God as he ought. The sense of these words is as if she should have said, Because I bear thee most entire good-will, I have not sent a messenger for thee, but come myself, and what good luck is this that I meet with thee?

Ver. 16. *I have decked my bedstead with coverlets, with sundry picture works, with curtains of Egypt.*

Ver. 17. *I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.*

The harlot in these words entreateth the young man, having now supped with her, to stay and lodge in her house all night. The reason which she bringeth to this intent is taken from the ornaments and furniture of her bedding: I have princely lodging for thee, saith she, therefore I pray thee refuse not to stay with me all night.

Ver. 18. *Come thy way, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us delight ourselves with amorous joys.*

Ver. 19. *For mine husband is not at home, he is gone a far journey.*

Ver. 20. *He took in his hand a bag of money, at the day appointed he will return home.*

The naughty woman in these verses enticeth the young man into the very act of adultery. To this end she bringeth two reasons: whereof the one is pleasure, (a subtle bait to take the young man by;) the other is security, telling him that her husband is gone a far journey, which long absence of her husband is confirmed by two signs thereof, the great bag of money which he took with him, and the set day wherein he appointed to return.

Ver. 21. *She drew him by her great craft, (or the store of her craft,) by the flattery of her lips she prowled him on.*

Ver. 22. *He followeth her forthwith: as an ox goeth to the slaughter, and as a fool to the correction of the fetters.<sup>1</sup>*

Ver. 23. *Until a sharp pointed weapon cleaveth his liver: like as a bird hasteneth to the snare, not knowing that it is set for her life.*

The force or issue of the strange woman's oration is declared in these verses. First of all, herein she is resembled to a schoolmistress, which leadeth and draweth her novices and scholars to follow her, and do what she prescribeth or persuadeth. Secondly, he (the young man I mean) is resembled, first, to an ox which followeth the drover to the shambles, where he is knocked on the head. For, indeed, in like manner the wanton youth followeth the harlot to her house, where the goodman coming in at unawares revengeth him. In the next place, the young man is compared to a foolish malefactor, led to the prison, there to be kept in chains until the day of execution, at which time the executioner thrusteth him through with some sharp pointed sword, to the end that his heart or liver being cleft, or cut in sunder, his life may quite be taken away.<sup>2</sup> For after this manner it fareth with the witless youth, who, either by the harlot's husband, or the public magistrate, is at last taken and put to death. Last of all, the young man is likened to a bird, which, flying greedily toward the lure, is caught in the snare, to her destruction. For he committing folly with the naughty woman, is by one means or other plagued and revenged.

Ver. 24. *Now therefore, O sons, listen unto me, and hearken to the words of my mouth.*

Ver. 25. *Let not thy soul go astray toward her ways, wander not aside toward her paths.*

Ver. 26. *For she hath wounded and struck down many, and mighty men of all sorts have been slain by her.*

<sup>1</sup> I turn these words as Drusius doth, who thus rendereth them in Latin, *Sicut stultus ad castigationem compedis.*—*Pro.*, class. 1 lib. iv.

<sup>2</sup> That the executioners in those times used with the sword to thrust through or kill malefactors, may appear, 1 Kings ii. 25, and other places of Scripture.

Ver. 27. *The ways to her house (are the ways) to the grave, going down to the secret vaults of death.*

In this conclusion of the chapter Solomon cometh to apply the former parable. First, He sheweth the remedies of adultery; one whereof is the hearing of the word, another, the flying of the place where the harlot keepeth. Secondly, He declareth the ruins which the adulteress hath wrought in the world, whereof one is, that she hath slain innumerable people, as may appear in the destruction of the old world, the plaguing of the Israelites for their wantonness, and the wars between the Grecians and Trojans; another is, that the mighty potentates of the world have also by her means been brought to misery or death, as Samson, David, this our Solomon, with infinite other.

### CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1. *Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding lift up her voice?*

Ver. 2. *On the top of the high places, standing by the highway in the place of many paths.*

Ver. 3. *At the side of the gates, in the coming in of the city, in the entry of the doors they sing, saying.*

The excellency of wisdom and understanding is at large set down in this chapter, which containeth two points: the one, the manner of their calling unto men to come unto them, in these three verses (the exposition whereof is set down in the interpretation of the twentieth and one and twentieth verses of the first chapter of this book;) the other is, the sum or matter of their proclamation or oration, in the rest of the chapter.

Ver. 4. *O men, I call unto you, and I utter my voice unto the sons of men.*

Ver. 5. *O ye simple ones, understand wariness, and O ye fools, be wise in heart.*

In this beginning of the proclamation, the persons called by understanding, or wisdom (even by the personal wisdom of God, Jesus Christ) are described. 'O men, I call to you,' &c. I, Jesus Christ, call all estates of people to hear my doctrine, both those who are of high degree, as, namely, on the one side, the noble, the learned, and the rich; and those that

are of low degree, as the poor, the simple, and contemptible.

Ver. 6. *Hearken; for I will utter excellent things, and the opening of my mouth shall propound upright things.*

Ver. 7. *For the roof of my mouth shall record truth, and wickedness is abomination to my lips.*

Ver. 8. *All the speeches of my mouth are just; there is nothing in them crooked or awry.*

Ver. 9. *All of them are easy to the prudent man, and plain to those who find knowledge.*

Ver. 10. *Receive mine instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than most fine gold.*

Ver. 11. *For wisdom is better than pearls, and no delights can be matched with her.*

The Son of God declareth herein the excellency of his doctrine, to the end that every one should hearken thereunto. First he saith, I will speak of excellent things. The doctrine of the word is full of majesty and royalty, for it doth entreat, not of base arguments, but of divine and rare points, as of election, regeneration, faith, and the glory which is to come. Secondly, The word of God is upright, for it is perfect, and able to make a man wise unto salvation, see Ps. xix.; in it is nothing wanting, nothing unsound. Thirdly, The word is also true; for whatsoever God hath said, it shall come to pass, whose word hath been tried as the silver, seven times in the fire. Fourthly, The speeches of Christ are just, condemning all things which are unlawful, and commanding all things which are lawful. Fifthly, The word of God is plain and easy; for albeit the natural man perceiveth not the things which belong to God, yet the spiritual man discerneth all things. Wherefore, if the gospel be hid from any, it is hid from those whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded that they cannot see the truth. Sixthly, The word is also profitable, yea, more profitable than gold; for what would it profit a man to win the whole world and to lose his soul eternally, which by the word of God is saved? Last of all, The word of God is also most sweet and pleasant, for it rejoiceth the heart and sweeteneth the soul like a heavenly kind of honey. And who would not now rather hearken to the royal, upright, true, just, easy, profitable, and pleasant speeches of wisdom, than the vile, wicked, flattering, impure, subtle, and in very deed most bitter words of the harlot?

Ver. 12. *I wisdom dwell with prudence, (or wariness,) and find forth the knowledge of politic devices.*

Ver. 13. *The fear of the Lord, the hatred of evil; contemptuousness and haughtiness, and the way of wickedness, and a mouth of perverseness, I hate.*

Ver. 14. *Counsel is mine, and substance; prudence is mine; strength mine own.*

Herein Jesus Christ proceedeth to make himself further known, and more and more amiable, by entreating a while of his own divine virtues. 'I wisdom dwell with prudence, or wariness.' The Son of God, Christ Jesus, is most circumspect, witty, prudent, and politic himself, and the worker of these graces in mortal men. 'The fear of the Lord, the hatred of evil,' &c. The Son of God is also most righteous, for he loveth the good, and detesteth the evil; Ps. xlv., wherefore God, even his God, hath anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows. 'Counsel is mine, and substance,' &c. The Son of God is also a counsellor, as Isaiah calleth him; for he is both of the privy council of his Father, and the adviser of his church. Moreover, he hath strength in him, being the arm of God to conquer sin, with hell and Satan, and is able to do whatsoever he will. Substance, or the being of things, is likewise his, for he causeth all creatures to be and subsist.

Ver. 15. *By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice.*

Ver. 16. *By me princes bear rule, and all the noble judges of the earth.*

Now Christ Jesus speaketh of his excellent and wonderful works. 'By me kings reign,' &c. There is no power or potentate but they are from me, the Son of God; yea, by me also they discharge their functions, for I give all magistrates and worthy persons their places and graces. The chief monarchs of the world come unto their sceptres by the power and permission of the Son of God. Lawgivers and counsellors, by his direction and inspiration, give advice and invent politic laws. Inferior rulers and lieutenants keep their places, countenance, and authority by his assistance, whereunto also they rise by his secret disposing of matters. Finally, judges and justices, who use to keep courts, and to sit on benches, do by him, from him, and for him, pronounce sentence, handle matters of state, execute laws, and finally determine all cases.

Ver. 17. *I love them who love me; and they who seek me earnestly find me.*

Ver. 18. *Riches and honour are with me; enduring wealth and righteousness.*

Ver. 19. *My fruit is better than gold; yea, than right pure gold; and my revenue than most fine silver.*

Ver. 20. *I walk through the way of justice, through the midst of the paths of equity:*

Ver. 21. *To cause my lovers to inherit substance, and I replenish their storehouses.*

The heavenly wisdom of the Father, Jesus Christ, affirmeth in these sentences that he bestoweth all happiness on his true worshippers. For, first, He loveth them who love him—that is, he giveth them his grace and favour, like a friend talking, walking, dining, supping with them, and secretly cheering up their hearts. Secondly, He bestoweth on them the riches of the mind, as knowledge, temperance, patience, and suchlike virtues, which remain in the faithful for ever, and which are more precious than gold or any metal, more pleasant than grapes or any fruits of the trees. Thirdly, He doth impute his righteousness unto them, sanctifying them also by the Holy Spirit, which leadeth them in the ways of the Lord's commandments. Last of all, he will glorify them in the world to come, causing them to enjoy the presence of God for evermore.

Ver. 22. *Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before his works, before all time.*

Ver. 23. *Before the world was I anointed, before the beginning, before the first beginning of the earth.*

Ver. 24. *Whilst yet there were no depths was I born: whilst yet there were no springs abounding with waters.*

Ver. 25. *Whilst as yet the mountains were not settled, before the little hills was I born:*

Ver. 26. *As yet he had not made the earth, or the plains, no, nor the groundwork, (or) the dust of the world inhabited.*

Herein the Son of God entreateth of his being, and of his calling to the office of a Mediator. 'Jehovah possessed me in the beginning,' &c. I, the eternal Word of God, was with God the Father at the beginning, John i. 1, being of one and the self-same essence with him and the Spirit. 'Before the world was I anointed,' &c. I was appointed to the office of a mediator betwixt God and man from all

eternity. 'Whilst yet there were no depths was I born,' &c., Heb. i. 2. I had my person from the person of my Father from all eternity, being begotten before all creatures, and to continue for ever.

Ver. 27. *When he made firm the heavens, I was there: when he set the round compass on the outside of the deep:*

Ver. 28. *When he strengthened the upper clouds above: when he made firm the fountains of the deep:*

Ver. 29. *When he prescribed his decree to the sea and the waters, that they pass not his commandment: when he laid the foundation of the earth.*

Now Jesus Christ declareth that he did work together with the Father in the creating of the world at the beginning. For, first, As concerning the heavens, he made hard and fast as the adamant those liquid waters whereof they consist. Secondly, As touching the air, called here the compass on the deep, he so framed the clouds, as that, like bottles or glasses, they were, and still are, fit vessels to contain the waters above. Thirdly, He formed the floods, springs, and seas, binding up the waters herein, as it were, in certain swaddling bands. Last of all, He laid the earth at the beginning, as the groundwork or foundation of the whole world.

Ver. 30. *Moreover, I am with him as a nourisher; and I am a daily delight, cheering up before him at all times.*

Ver. 31. *Cheering up his earth in the world inhabited; and my delights are with the sons of men.*

As before Christ Jesus hath shewed that he created all things, so now his intent is to declare that he governeth the whole world, bearing it up by the word of his power. 'Moreover, I am with him as a nourisher.' Furthermore, I the Son of God, being God co-essential with my Father, together with him preserve all things as a nurse, reaching out my hand to feed them and cherish them, Ps. cxlv. 16. 'And I am a daily delight, cheering up before him at all times.' In me also the Father is continually well pleased, to whom I am a singular recreation as it were. 'Cheering up his earth in the world inhabited.' Again, I am the joy of the earth, which, together with all the creatures therein, I refresh, causing my sun to shine, and my dews to fall upon them, Acts xiv. 17. 'And my delights are with the sons of men.' But, to conclude, I chiefly love and

solace mortal wights, whose hearts I fill with joy and gladness, to whom I give the use of all my creatures, whom I indue with reason and other excellent gifts: finally, whose redemption I am, and on whom I bestow my word and Spirit.

Ver. 32. *Now therefore, O sons, hearken unto me: for blessed are they that keep my ways.*

Ver. 33. *Hear instruction, and be wise, and withdraw not yourselves.*

Ver. 34. *Blessed is the man who hearkeneth unto me, attending diligently at my gates from day to day, waiting at the posts of my doors.*

Ver. 35. *For whosoever findeth me findeth life, and hath obtained favour of the Lord.*

Ver. 36. *But he who sinneth against me hurteth his own soul: all they who hate me love death.*

From teaching, wisdom now cometh to exhort. 'Now therefore, O sons, hearken unto me,' &c. The case thus standing, as hath been declared, give not care to the harlot, but obey me the personal wisdom of God. 'Blessed is the man who hearkeneth unto me.' Happy is every one who heareth the word of God and keepeth it, seeking also by prayer for the grace of God, and knocking continually at the gate of his mercy. 'For whosoever findeth me findeth life.' For this is eternal life, to know the true God, and him whom he hath sent, Jesus Christ. 'All they that hate me love death.' They that reject me draw on themselves damnation; wherefore, if any love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *'Αναθεμα Ματαθαυ*.

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## CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1. *Wisdom hath built her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars.*

This chapter is, as it were, a table, wherein two pictures are painted out before our eyes: the one of divine wisdom, the other of the harlot or foolish woman. Heavenly wisdom is in the beginning of this chapter resembled to a lady or queen, that erecteth up some stately and magnificent building, wherein she meaneth to keep great hospitality. This is the doctrine then which here is delivered, that there is a place, yea, a fair and princely palace, wherein the lovers of wisdom shall be feasted with

delights unspeakable, and whither it is good for them to repair; this is the kingdom of heaven, the house of God, the bosom of Abraham. This building is strong, standing upon sufficient pillars; this frame is goodly, for all the pillars are hewn and carved. To conclude, this palace hath all rooms therein well contrived; for wisdom hath built it. Thus have we considered one of the works of wisdom, let us proceed to another.

Ver. 2. *She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath furnished her table.*

Whenas a gentlewoman or lady intendeth to make a feast unto strangers, or her friends, she causeth divers beasts to be slain, as oxen, sheep, calves, and suchlike, that there may be food enough for the guests. For this cause it is said that wisdom hath killed her victuals, to shew that she hath prepared meat enough. But the chief ornament of a feast is pleasant, pure, and strong drink; wherefore it is further added, that she hath mingled, or, as the Hebrew word doth also bear, strained her wine, which maketh glad the heart of man. Now, beside this good provision which wisdom hath made, she hath also furnished her table; for she hath spread the cloth, set on the cups, and placed all things on the table in print. Neither bread nor salt, nor any things needful to a feast, are wanting. Such things as these do lady-like dames provide for their guests; but those things, which neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, nor the heart of man conceived, hath the Lord prepared for his. Christ Jesus is bread indeed; his flesh is meat indeed; his blood is drink indeed. The grace of God's Spirit, and the glory to come, are greater dainties than can be in this world. Of these our Saviour speaketh in the Gospel of Matthew, where he saith that the king hath slain his victuals, and prepared all things, Mat. xxii. 1, 2. David meaneth these, when he boasteth in the psalm that God prepareth a table before him, and anointeth his head with oil, and causeth his cup to overflow, Ps. xxiii. 5. I tell you plain, there is good cheer in God's kingdom: go to what table you will, you shall not find the like. If, then, you would be well fed, and withal well taught, go to wisdom. Thus much concerning the second work of wisdom, to wit, her entertainment.

Ver. 3. *She hath sent forth her handmaids: she calleth throughout the assemblies, and the high places of the city.*

It is not for the credit of a gentlewoman or lady herself, in her own person, to go about bidding her guests; but rather it is agreeable to her estate that she send forth her servants to invite them, and that they go to those meetings for that intent, where the greatest number of people are gathered, or stand in those high places from whence they may be best heard. In like manner the King of kings, even the eternal God, going about to solemnise the marriage of his Son, sent forth his servants to call those that were bidden to the marriage, Mat. xxii. 3. These choice and special servants were the prophets and apostles, according as our Saviour testifieth in the Gospel, where he telleth the lawyers, that the wisdom of God hath said in the Scripture, 'I will send unto you prophets and apostles, and of them shall they slay and persecute,' Luke xi. 49. The very heathen themselves, that they might be left the more without excuse, had their wise men and prophets sent unto them by heavenly wisdom, many of whom truly did walk very civilly, and reprove sin vehemently, and exhort to virtue notably; whereas some in these times, who intrude themselves into sacred functions, neither know the mystery of Christ, nor are able to speak of vice or virtue to any purpose, neither are patterns of godliness or righteousness to their flocks, but rather examples of all impiety and iniquity in the whole course of their dealings. It may be thought that wisdom never sent forth these handmaids, but that the rashness of their brains, the darkness of their minds, the pride of their hearts, and the covetousness of their affections, have moved them to run before they were sent, as giddy-headed servants are wont to do. Thus much concerning the third work of wisdom, which is her sending forth of her servants. Now let us hearken to her words.

Ver. 4. *Whosoever is foolish, let him turn in hither: and to him that is void of understanding, she speaketh.*

The guests or persons invited to come to wisdom's house, before spoken of, that therein they may hear her doctrines, enjoy her presence, and taste of her banquet, are herein described. First of all the foolish are called into wisdom's house, even those

simple ones who are ignorant, and blind, and void of judgment; secondly, Such as are void of understanding, in such sort, as that, preferring earth before heaven, and vanity before virtue, they are corrupt in their lives, are likewise bidden to repair to the palace wherein wisdom keepeth. Not the great states of the world, nor the famous politics; but the rude, the base, the publicans and sinners, are invited and sent unto. Such poor and miserable people are not to fear that wisdom will shut her gates against them, but rather to assure themselves that he will open them wide unto them.

Ver. 5. *Come, eat of my meat, and drink of my wine which I have mixed.*

A bountiful lady cannot abide to eat her morsels alone, nor that those which sit at her table should abstain from her victuals which she hath provided. No more can the Lord away, that men should refuse to feed on his blessings, or to be partakers of the good things which he hath prepared for them. Hence it is that in the prophet the Lord crieth out, 'O whosoever thirsteth, come to these waters; come, I say, buy wine and milk without money; hearken unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness,' Isa. lv. 1. Which is as much as if he should say, I would fain have you be satisfied with all sorts of my benefits—with knowledge, with joy of heart, with health, with peace, with plenty, with life eternal. These and suchlike are the milk, the wine, the bread, the water, the fat beasts I speak of. But what is to be done by foolish and simple people, that they may be partakers of these blessings, which something hitherto hath hindered them from? Even that which followeth in the next verse, where it is said:

Ver. 6. *O ye simple ones, forsake your error, and live, and walk in the way of understanding.*

The meaning of these words is, that if sinners would taste the goodness of God, yea, and be filled with his blessings in this life, and the life to come, they must lay aside evil, and do that which is good, and in one word repent. To the same effect speaketh the prophet David in the psalm, when he saith, 'Who is the man that would live, that desireth to see good? depart from evil and do good; seek peace, and ensue it,' Ps. xxxiv.

Ver. 7. *He which instructeth a scorner getteth*

*himself reproach; and he that reproveth a wicked man purchaseth to himself a blot.*

Wisdom seemeth in this verse secretly to insinuate, that she would not have obstinate or unrepentant sinners, who despise God, and all godliness, called to her banquet, or earnestly urged by her messengers to their duties. Our Saviour in the Gospel speaketh to the same effect to his disciples, telling them that he would not have them cast pearls before swine, or give holy things to dogs, Mat. vi. 7; we are not to count every one a scorner or wicked person, that is, a great sinner, but such only as are given over to wickedness, and persecute the known truth. Whosoever goeth about to admonish such, doth but procure to himself some harm or discredit, seeing the mockers of all good counsel will but strike them, or revile them for their labour. All reproving of the ungodly is not forbidden, neither is all rebuking even of scorners condemned, who, for example's sake, are by those that are in the ministry oftentimes to be checked and controlled, as the pharisees were by our Saviour Christ. But when no good will come of our schooling of them, neither anything else will arise thereof, saving that their rage and cruelty will be incensed and increased, it were great folly to spend labour in telling them of their faults, and wisdom rather it were to make a separation from them; for it is not good to stir up hornets, or to put the hand into a wasp's nest, which point while some consider not, for that without discretion they bestow the seed of wholesome admonition on cursed and unprofitable ground, they worthily reap for all their pains the thorns of mocks, reproaches, and many troubles.

Ver. 8. *Rebuke not a scorner, lest he hate thee: reprove a wise man, and he will love thee.*

It is extreme madness to strive against the stream, and to seek for nothing but hatred. Whereas then the wicked hate them that reprove them in the gate, as the prophet speaketh, he is void of understanding that will unnecessarily stir them up to bear ill-will; for what if the scorner reproach thee not by words, yet if he malice thee in his affections, it will be the worse with thee, and when occasion is offered, he will do thee some mischief. Whereas then the same action of reproving hath a contrary effect in a wise man, bestow thine admonitions rather on

him, and he will bear thee good-will, and for the same do thee a good turn when it lieth in his power. For inasmuch as he seeth that thou dost not hate him, but tell him plainly of his sin, and feeleth that thy reproof worketh in him amendment of life, he will bless the Lord for thee, and bless thee for thy friendly dealing, as David did Abigail, when she by her persuasion stayed him from bloody revenge.

Ver. 9. *Give instruction to the wise man, and he will become the more wise; cause the righteous man to understand, and he will increase in learning.*

In these words we are to mark who are to be taught, and why these persons are to be taught. The wise, who are sound in judgment, although they have some errors, and the righteous, who walk in some obedience to the word, though they have some frailties, are to be instructed. The reason why these persons are to be instructed is, for that such will by such means wax the wiser, as Apollos did by the direction of Aquila and Priscilla, and Moses did by Jethro's advice; and increase in godliness and virtue, as David did by Abigail's persuasion, and by Nathan's parable.

Ver. 10. *The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of holy things is understanding.*

Methinketh that this sentence is very excellent, and not without cause so often repeated, not only in this book, but in other places of the Scripture, Job xxviii. 28; Ps. cxi. 10. For take away the fear of God, engendered by the word of God, and who will abstain from doing wickedness, whenas he thinketh he may lie hid? who will shun those vices which by law are not punished? who will fear an oath that feareth not God? who will of conscience shun evil and do that which is good? Because the fear of God is in the wise and just, they profit by instructions and reproofs. The foolish and simple can never become wise till they have begun to fear the Lord. So, likewise, the knowledge of holy things is understanding; for what good would it do a man to be a cunning lawyer, and yet condemned everlastingly? and to be a skilful physician, and yet not able to salve the sores of his soul? and to be passingly well seen in music, and yet always troubled with a jarring conscience? or to conclude, to be learned in all the arts and sciences, and yet ignorant

of Christ, whom only if thou knowest, the matter is not great, if thou knowest nothing else.

Ver. 11. *For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and years of life heaped upon thee.*

Wisdom in this verse sheweth every one whom she calleth to her banquet that they shall not lose anything by coming to her, but be preserved in life and happiness. How true this is it may appear in that the godly enjoy many blessings, and continue in this world; whilst the wicked perish through their sins, and are cut off by untimely death oftentimes.

Ver. 12. *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou be a scorner, thou alone shalt suffer.*

As great profit will redound unto men if they embrace wisdom, so wisdom shall neither be hurt nor advantaged whether they embrace her or no: 'For if thou be wise, thou shalt be wise to thyself.' If thou fearest the Lord, and attainest to the knowledge of his will, this will not advantage God, who cannot be benefited by thee, nor needeth anything; but this will profit thee, who shalt, as a reward of wisdom, receive many blessings in this life, and save thy soul for ever. 'But if thou be a scorner, thou alone shalt suffer.' On the contrary side, as malefactors hurt not the judge who condemneth them justly, but bear their own crosses, and smart for their own offences; so, if thou be a despiser of God and godliness, thou shalt not hurt the Lord, who is out of thy reach, but thou shalt bear thine own judgment. Consider this, ye blasphemers of the name of God, who jest at the Scriptures, and who, if God lay any sore affliction on you, rage against him, as if he were neither of any power nor of any holiness. Cast up your blood with Julian toward the heaven, and say with scorn, Thou hast overcome, thou Galilean; but know that ye kick against the prick, which, as it will hurt you, so can it not receive any hurt from you. I tell you, wisdom is as a mighty stone, at which you may not only break your shins if you take not heed, but dash out your brains to your unrecoverable destruction. Thus much concerning the wise matron; let us now proceed to the description of the foolish woman.

Ver. 13. *The foolish woman is full of babbling; the simple woman even knoweth nothing.*

In this latter part of the chapter the folly of flesh and blood, contrary to heavenly wisdom, is repre-

sented to our view in the person of a base and beggarly harlot. As, therefore, the whorish woman useth many speeches of enticing, so this foolish woman allureth men to sin by many reasons and persuasions, oftentimes telling them of the sweetness thereof, and the profit which they shall have thereby. Again, as the harlot knoweth not the foulness of adultery, or the greatness of God's judgment, so neither doth human folly understand aright and effectually either the filthiness of sin, or heaviness of God's wrath against it, or the will of the Lord.

Ver. 14. *She sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city.*

As a strumpet lieth in wait abroad, most subtly and shamelessly to draw companions to her, so human folly, having great desire to catch men to destruction, openly and yet withal craftily, enticeth men to evil; for the end of her sitting is that which is set down in the next verse.

Ver. 15. *To turn aside passengers who even go on straight in their paths.*

As wisdom goeth about to convert such as go astray, so human folly laboureth to pervert and to entangle with the lusts of the flesh such as indeed had escaped from those who have their conversation in error, 2 Peter ii.

Ver. 16. *And whosoever is foolish, let him turn in hither; and whosoever is void of understanding, to him she speaketh.*

Flesh and blood allureth the godly, and enticeth also those which are ignorant of the word of God, and those which have not the love thereof; for she knoweth that she shall prevail most with such as can least resist her, and therefore she hopeth that of evil she shall make them stark naught.

Ver. 17. *Stolen waters are sweet, and hidden bread is pleasant.*

Ver. 18. *But he knoweth not that they who are void of life are there, and that her guests are in the valleys of the grave.*

Delightful pleasures and gainful commodities, howbeit unlawful, are here meant by the parable of stolen waters and hidden bread. Unto some sort of people (I cannot tell how) their own possessions seem vile, but other men's goods are much desired by them. Hence it cometh to pass, that when by hook or crook they can get either drink or

meat from their neighbours, they greatly delight in the tasting thereof. But because they are loath to be known, or counted thieves, therefore commonly they eat their stolen bread, and drink their stolen drink in corners. Truly, so the baits of sin are sweet and pleasant to earthly-minded men. A delight they take in adultery, theft, robbery, drunkenness, and such other vices, especially when they commit these sins in darkness, or in some corner. But even as they that join themselves to a harlot meet with sorrow, shame, and destruction, as before hath been declared; so they that have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness incur God's vengeance and endless damnation. This willingly they are ignorant of, that they which do these things shall never enter into the kingdom of God. But it is most sure and certain that sin is the bane of transgressors, as the harlot is of her lovers; yea, the harlot hath slain many, but sin more. The good cheer of the harlot hath often proved deadly poison to adulterers; but the pleasures of sin are always the destruction of all unrepentant evil-doers. 'Without are dogs, and enchanters, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and those that love and work falsehood,' Rev. xxii. 15. These are the guests that are void of life, and that are in the valleys of the grave.

## CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1. *A wise son rejoiceth his father: but a foolish son is an heaviness to his mother.*

Children are admonished in this holy proverb to honour and comfort their parents as much as in them lieth. He only is a wise son who knoweth and feareth God. Such a child rejoiceth his godly parents by the virtues which are in him, and the good report which goeth on him. He is a foolish son who is rude or wicked. Such a child bringeth sorrow to both his parents, but chiefly to his mother, who loveth him most tenderly, and being the weaker vessel, cannot but grieve most extremely to see his folly, and to hear of his lewdness.

Ver. 2. *The treasures of iniquity profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.*

The goods which are gathered with evil affections,



and heaped up by unlawful means, are treasures of iniquity. Store of such wealth doth nothing avail, to wit, in the day of wrath; for it will not save the life of the sinner, or turn away the plague from him, when God goeth about to punish offenders, or to revenge the world for sin. But righteousness delivereth from death, to wit, in the time of vengeance; for uprightness is that mark of election and life, which the Lord spyng in any, when he plagueth the wicked for their transgressions, spareth them, and preserveth them from destruction. Thus although the righteousness of the just person deserveth nothing at God's hands, neither is any cause of men's preservation or salvation, yet it serveth as a sovereign treacle to preserve the well-doer from that deadly plague, which is sent from the Lord to destroy the disobedient, and as a letter of passport to safe-conduct the faithful person in perilous times, and to protect him from all dangers.

Ver. 3. *The Lord suffereth not the soul of the righteous to hunger, but he scattereth the substance of the wicked.*

God so loveth the just that he preserveth them in the time of famine. 'The Lord suffereth not the soul of the righteous to hunger.' It is the custom of the Lord, in the time of some common dearth, so extraordinarily and plentifully to provide for his, that they feel no want. 'But he scattereth the substance of the wicked.' On the contrary side, God so consumeth the goods of the ungodly, that they become very poor, and so oftentimes suffer extreme famine. Thus as Hannah, the mother of Samuel, witnesseth, 'They that are full lend their service for bread, and they that suffer famine cease to be hungry,' 1 Sam. ii. 5. Thus, as the prophet David also testifieth, 'The young lions become needy and suffer hunger: but they that fear the Lord shall want nothing,' Ps. xxxiv. 11. Finally thus, as the Virgin Mary affirmeth in her most excellent song, 'The Lord hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away,' Luke i. 52.

Ver. 4. *A slothful hand maketh poor, but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.*

That is, a slothful hand, which worketh not at all, or laboureth slackly, such a slack hand maketh poor; for it earneth less than the mouth eateth, and spendeth more in a short time than it getteth in a long time. 'But the hand of the diligent maketh rich.'

The painful hand which worketh hard, not only getteth so much wealth as is sufficient, but gathereth store of riches, and plenty of all things.

Ver. 5. *He that gathereth in summer is a son of understanding: but he that sleepeth in harvest, is a son of confusion.*

The opportunity is in all matters carefully to be observed. He gathereth in summer who, redeeming the time, maketh his best advantage of the season; for the summer is that fit season wherein the fruits of the earth are got into the barn for the whole year following. He that thus in due season provideth for his body or soul, is worthily called a son of understanding, or a wise man; for he hath not only prudently foreseen what was best to be done, but wisely took the occasion offered unto his best advantage. On the contrary side, he sleepeth in harvest, who fondly letteth slip the most convenient means or opportunity of doing or receiving good. Such a one is a son of confusion, that is to say, one that shall be ashamed or confounded, by reason of the want or misery whereinto he shall fall through his own folly.

Ver. 6. *Blessings are on the head of the righteous: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.*

Not one, but many blessings are on the head of the righteous; the blessing of peace, the blessing of plenty, the blessing of grace, and the blessing of health, shall be upon them. The precious ointment of the Lord's favour or blessing shall so be poured upon their heads, as that it shall not here stay, but run down to the rest of the members of their bodies, and enter into their very hearts. But violence covereth the mouth of the wicked; that is to say, vengeance, or some violent plague, shall seize upon the ungodly person, in such sort as that it shall even stop his breath, and take away his life.

Ver. 7. *The memory of the just shall be blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.*

Among the manifold blessings wherewith God crowneth the righteous, a good name is one of the chiefest. 'The memory of the just shall be blessed.' The remembrance and fame of the upright person shall be acceptable, honourable, and everlasting. 'But the name of the wicked shall rot.' As for the present fame or glory of the ungodly man, it shall not only decay in time, and wither like a leaf, but be turned

into infamy, and become abominable like a thing that is corrupt, or a stinking carrion.

Ver. 8. *He that receiveth instruction is wise in heart : but he that is foolish in his lips shall be beaten.*

This sentence teacheth that every man ought to be swift to hear, and slow to speak. Great cause there is why a man should be swift to hear ; for 'he that receiveth instruction is wise in heart.' Such a one as hearkeneth unto and obeyeth good counsel attaineth to knowledge, and provideth well for himself. Again, no less reason there is why a man should be slow to speak : for 'he that is foolish in his lips shall be beaten.' Such a one as careth not to hear other speak, but useth himself to talk much and indiscreetly, shall be scourged for his folly with manifold troubles, misery being always the end and reward of an unbridled tongue.

Ver. 9. *He that walketh uprightly, walketh boldly : but he that perverteth his ways shall be made an example.*

It is a good thing for a man always to have a good cause, and a good conscience. He walketh uprightly that liveth innocently, being without all guile, and doing that which is good. Such a one walketh boldly, that is, feareth no evil, but assureth himself of the protection of the Lord, and of good success. It is not so with him that perverteth his ways, that is to say, who committeth wickedness, or followeth after guile ; for he shall be made an example, that is to say, he shall not only be troubled with inward fears, but openly be punished.

Ver. 10. *He that winketh with the eye shall have sorrow : and he that is foolish in his lips shall be beaten.*

Two sorts of wicked people who pervert their ways are herein reprov'd. The one, dissemblers, who are not'd out by the property of winking with the eye, wherewith if any wink to an evil purpose, as in so doing he applieth himself to work sorrow to other, so he shall be sure to procure some trouble to himself which will grieve his heart. The other, rash talkers, who are foolish in their lips ; for which cause they shall receive stripes in their bodies, as dissemblers shall in the end feel sorrow in their minds, when they see their crafty devices overthrow'n, or feel the Lord's heavy hand upon them.

Ver. 11. *A well-spring of life watereth the mouth of*

*the righteous, but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.*

The latter part of this sentence hath before in this chapter been expounded, ver. 9. As concerning the former, therein is taught that the just man shall not perish with thirst ; for it is said that a well-spring of life, that is, a fountain of living waters, shall besprinkle and refresh the mouth of the righteous. But whereas under one blessing the Scripture comprehendeth many, and therein a well-spring of life doth often signify plenty of excellent blessings, we are further from this kind of speech to gather and understand that store of God's sweet mercies shall never be wanting to the just person.

Ver. 12. *Hatred raiseth up contentions : but love covereth all offences.*

The former part of this sentence declareth that ill-will is the very root of brawls, frays, suits in law, and all sorts of controversies. Hatred raiseth up contentions, by offering occasion of falling out, by objecting secret faults, and by amplifying of small offences. But love covereth all offences, or a multitude of sins ; for they who bear hearty good-will to one another, revenge nothing, wink at many things, and pardon all things done amiss. Love covereth offences, partly by forgetting and forgiving them, partly by reproving them in a friendly manner, and partly by concealing them from all those to whom the knowledge of them hath not come.

Ver. 13. *Wisdom is found in the lips of the wise ; but a rod on the back of the fool.*

The ornament of the prudent person is on his lips. For therein wisdom, that is to say, wise doctrine, is found, whereby he instructeth the rude and ignorant, and calleth them from their error and wickedness. But seeing the fool will not regard nor obey the counsel or instruction of the wise man, therefore the rod, that is, the punishment of the Lord, is on his back. For he that heareth good advice, and yet will not follow it, is chastened by the Lord with one affliction or other ; yea, and scourged with more stripes than he that never had the means of his conversion or salvation.

Ver. 14. *The wise treasure up knowledge : but destruction is near to the mouth of the fool.*

Albeit knowledge is a very good thing, yet the prudent person doth not in all places, or at all times,

publish that which he knoweth; but as a prudent householder layeth up and keepeth under lock and key his money and provision, so he treasureth up in his heart the good things which he hath learned or knoweth, to the end he may draw them forth in time convenient unto the good of others. But albeit vanity is an evil thing; yet the fool, that is, a simple or ungodly man, doth so desire to utter it, that he cannot keep it in, although it hurt both others and himself. Thus the fool, by his vain mouth, draweth upon himself great trouble and swift destruction.

Ver. 15. *The substance of the rich man is his defenced city: the poverty of the poor is their breaking.*

Herein the commodity of riches on the one side, and the discommodity of poverty on the other, is declared. 'The substance of the rich man is his defenced city.' The wealth of the rich man is his strength, and both preserveth him from many evils, and ministereth unto him many good things. The poverty of the poor is their breaking. For want and penury, like a mighty hammer, breaketh the hearts and bodies of the needy, who, by reason of their poverty, can neither resist evils, nor attain unto the comforts of this life.

Ver. 16. *The labour of the righteous is unto life: the revenue of the wicked is unto sin.*

Some use riches aright, others abuse them. The righteous man is said to get his goods unto life, because the drift of his labour is, that he may have wherewith to maintain himself, and to minister unto the necessity of others. The revenue of the wicked is said to be unto sin, because he spendeth his comings in upon his lusts, or some ill uses. Thus the vain person abuseth his goods, even to his own destruction.

Ver. 17. *He that keepeth instruction is in the way to life: but he that forsaketh correction goeth astray.*

Much good doth he find, that regardeth good counsel. 'He that keepeth instruction is in the way to life.' He that obeyeth wholesome advice, walketh in that narrow path which leadeth to prosperity in this world, and to eternal glory. Much hurt doth he incur, who profiteth not by reproofs or chastisements; for 'he that forsaketh correction goeth astray.' He that suffereth rebukes or troubles to pass without due profit, so wandereth from the paths of

happiness, as that he runneth headlong into temporal or eternal destruction.

Ver. 18. *He that hideth hatred is a man of deceitful lips; and he that uttereth a reproach is a fool.*

He that is close in cloaking his malice, is reproved here for his hypocrisy, for he is said to be a man of deceitful lips, that is, one that feigneth friendship in words, where he wisheth evil in heart. Again, he that openly sheweth his anger by uttering railing speeches, is condemned of folly, and called a fool. Indeed he is a fool, because he is rash, and hath no stay of his affection.

Ver. 19. *In many words sin cannot be wanting: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.*

Multitude of words is the well-spring of many vices. He that talketh much, must needs much offend, seeing among a multitude of words he cannot lightly but utter some superfluous, false, or offensive. Yet we are not to think that all long prayers or orations are here condemned; for it is no fault to utter many speeches which have in them matter of edification, or which proceed from the fullness of the grace of God's Spirit. But to have a talkative tongue, or to prattle without ceasing, is not only a sin of itself, but a fountain of many sins. The vice condemned in the former part of this sentence, is that superfluous babbling which is gotten by a certain love of speaking. The virtue on the contrary side commended, is sparing of speech; for it is said, that he that refraineth his lips is wise. Why is he wise? Because by this means he shunneth many sins, and the offence of many persons; besides that he ruleth his tongue, which is a most unruly member.

Ver. 20. *The tongue of the righteous is as fined silver, (but) the heart of the wicked is little worth.*

Precious and excellent is the speech of the godly, not drossy or superfluous, nor false and idle. For as the fined silver is pure and without mixture, so the talk of the just man is not only void of vanity and babbling, but full of divine instructions and admonitions. For the just man's mouth, as David speaketh, meditateth wisdom, and his tongue uttereth righteousness. Ps. xxxvii. 30. There is no deceit nor lying in his lips. On the other side, 'The heart of the wicked is little worth.' For the mind, and consequently the speech, of the evil man, is rather like

unto dross than unto pure silver. Hence it is that out of the evil treasure of his heart he bringeth forth evil things.

Ver. 21. *The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of knowledge.*

By feeding men are preserved in life. Whereas then it is said that 'the lips of the righteous feed many,' the meaning hereof is, that the words of godly pastors, and professors of the truth, nourish many in the life of the Spirit, and preserve them to eternal salvation. This is the best hospitality which the stewards of the Lord's house can keep, even to give every one of the household his portion of instruction in due season. 'But fools die for want of knowledge.' The ungodly perish, and die the second death of the soul, through ignorance and neglect of good instructions.

Ver. 22. *The blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and it doth bring no sorrow with it.*

Not fortune, not labour, not favour of men, but the blessing of God, maketh rich indeed. For except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that go about to build it. True it is that wicked men, by theft, extortion, and many evil means, rise up many times to great wealth; but as they get their goods with vexation of mind, and toil of body, so they possess them with no less care and fear. Wherefore riches which proceed not from the mere goodwill of God, are mingled with such trouble and heart-grief, as that a man were in a manner as good be without them as possess them. But the favour of the Lord not only causeth those that depend thereon to prosper, but giveth them wealth without woe, and store without sore.

Ver. 23. *It is a pastime to a fool to commit wickedness: but wisdom is the delight of the prudent.*

As the ungodly rejoice in doing evil, so the godly with joy follow that which is good. 'It is a pastime to a fool to commit wickedness.' The practising of iniquity, as for example of drunkenness or adultery, is, as it were, the game and recreation of the wicked man; for he thinketh it a trifling matter to commit sin, and when he doth any evil, he even triumpheth. Thus, as one speaketh no less truly than wittily, deriders and voluptuous persons go down to hell merrily, even smiling and laughing. 'But wisdom is the delight of the prudent.' Learning and godli-

ness is the joy and recreation of the well-disposed person, to whom it is even meat and drink to do God's will.

Ver. 24. *That which the wicked man feareth shall come upon him: but God will grant the desire of the righteous.*

The conscience of the evil-doer threateneth him oftentimes with much evil; for sometimes he feareth that his secret sin shall come to light; sometimes that for his wickedness he shall be punished; sometimes that he shall miss his purpose, and be crossed in his enterprises. Wherefore, to avoid and prevent evils feared and doubted of, he seeketh out and deviseth all the shifts he can, howbeit all in vain; for not only those miseries which he never thought on, but those which he most doubted, befall him on a sudden. It is then most sure and certain, that 'that which the wicked man feareth shall come upon him.' No less true it is, that 'God will grant the desire of the righteous.' Indeed, if the just shall ask anything amiss, they shall not obtain it. But when the godly shall with faith, and upon just cause and in due manner, wish something which is good, and may turn greatly to their comforts, they shall be sure to obtain their hearts' desire. For as the Lord useth to bestow on his many blessings which they think not of, so especially his custom is to grant them those good things which, in their necessity, they earnestly crave and pray for. The latter part of this sentence then notably accordeth with the sweet promise which is made in the psalm, where it is said, 'The Lord will grant the desire of those that fear him, and he will hear their prayer and save them,' Ps. cxlv. 19.

Ver. 25. *As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the just man is as an everlasting foundation.*

Whether the former part of this sentence be translated, When the whirlwind passeth, then the wicked is no more, or as it is set down, the sense is all one; for by both these speeches is meant, that the ungodly person doth not long continue; he is quickly gone as a storm, and easily thrown down by the tempest of God's wrath. The just man, on the contrary side, is compared to an everlasting foundation, because either he remaineth long in this life, or if he die, liveth and reigneth for ever with Christ,

on whom, as on a sure rock, he is ground and founded.

Ver. 26. *As vinegar is to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the slothful person to them that send him.*

Whatsoever is sharp or sour, be it vinegar or any like thing, it setteth the teeth an edge, and worketh pain unto them. In like manner smoke hurteth the eyes, and causeth them to smart exceedingly. The negligent messengers or servants who are sent of an errand, no less by their slowness or delay vex the very heart of him who sendeth them about any hasty business, than those things by their sharpness and fretting annoy the senses of the body. For such, as we say, are good to go on dead men's errands, and they cause those that send them to wait with grief for their return; yea, and they so trouble them, that they have no list either to take any food, or to take any rest. Beware then that neither thou be thyself such a slow messenger, nor commit thine affairs unto any that are slothful.

Ver. 27. *The fear of the Lord increaseth the days: but the years of the wicked are cut short.*

The holy reverence of the Lord is said to increase the days of a man's life, because it is a means of preserving those that are indued therewith from untimely death by the sword of the magistrate, or the immediate revenging hand of God; and again, for that it not only bringeth peace of conscience, which prolongeth and sweeteneth the natural life, but maketh men partakers of eternal salvation. On the contrary side, the years of the wicked are cut off, either by some plague of God, or punishment of rulers, which befalleth them by reason that they want the fear of God, which if it were in them, it would preserve them from many vices to which they are given, and so consequently save them from hasty destruction.

Ver. 28. *The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.*

Albeit the Lord doth sometimes, even a long space together, exercise his true worshippers with troubles, and hold them in suspense, yet at the last he granteth them the things which they hope they shall in the end receive. Hereupon must needs arise abundance of comfort and sundry joys unto them, seeing they find by experience that they have

not hoped in the Lord in vain. As for the expectation of the wicked, that shall perish, inasmuch as they shall not obtain the things looked for; and so, instead of joy, they shall have sorrow and vexation. See an example, Judges v. 30.

Ver. 29. *The way of the Lord is a strengthening to the upright: but a breaking in pieces to the workers of iniquity.*

Sometimes, by the way of the Lord, the observing of God's law, sometimes the course of God's providence, is meant in the Scripture, as here in this place. It is said to strengthen the upright, not only for that it fortifieth their hearts, but because it preserveth them by sundry means from destruction. The manner of the Lord's dealing with the wicked is quite contrary; for the Lord plagueth and crosseth them for their iniquities, and in their evil-doing, even throughout the whole course of their life, which is unfortunate and full of many miseries.

Ver. 30. *The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not dwell on the earth.*

Whereas it is said, 'The righteous shall never be removed,' the meaning of this speech is, that whosoever practiseth the works of obedience (divers whereof are specified in the 15th Psalm) shall not perish, although in this life he be shaken with sundry afflictions, but continue a peaceable possessor of the earth, a true member of the church, and a perpetual inheritor of God's kingdom, being never removed from the joy of the Spirit, the fellowship of the faithful, or the favour of the Lord. On the contrary side, 'The wicked shall not dwell on the earth,' for either the very ground will cast out the sinner for his iniquity; or an evil conscience will without ceasing disquiet him; or the true Church will separate and cut him off from her body as an unsound member; or Satan will pull him even into the pit of endless destruction.

Ver. 31. *The mouth of the righteous is fruitful in wisdom: but the tongue of the froward shall be cut out.*

The tongue is fitly and finely herein resembled unto a tree—the good tongue to a good tree, the evil tongue to an evil tree. As therefore a good tree prospereth and bringeth forth new fruit in abundance from year to year, so the mouth of the godly man, assisted and blessed by the Lord, uttereth continual exhortations and most profitable instruc-

tions, whereby many are nourished and edified in knowledge and obedience; for not only by a godly life, but by a wise and fruitful tongue, he doth much good unto those among whom he liveth. Again, on the contrary side, as a barren or corrupt tree, for the unfruitfulness and naughtiness thereof, deserveth to be cut down, and is often pulled up by the roots, so the tongue of froward men, who overthrow the faith, or subvert good manners, shall be hewn down by the axe of God's judgment, and put to utter silence.

Ver. 32. *The lips of the righteous know that which is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked froward things.*

A good tree cannot but bring forth good fruits, and an ill tree cannot but bring forth evil fruits. 'The lips of the righteous know that which is acceptable.' The mouth of the just man, who knoweth how to speak to every one, uttereth not foolish or unsavoury words, which the ear of a wise man would abhor, but such gracious speeches as may both be acceptable and profitable to the hearers, Col. iv. 6. On the contrary side, corrupt communication proceedeth out of the mouth of the ungodly, and such as rather destroyeth than buildeth up in the faith; for their lips are well acquainted with blasphemy, heresy, ribaldry, and vanity; with evil words corrupting good manners, and with perverse doctrines infecting the minds of many. Wherefore, also, as the good tongue shall know or feel God's sweet blessing, so the evil shall taste of his bitter judgment, as a due punishment of that frowardness wherein it hath delighted.

## CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1. *False balances are abomination to the Lord: but an upright weight is acceptable to him.*

This sentence well accordeth with that precept which the Lord in Deuteronomy giveth the Israelites, where he saith unto them, 'Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a greater weight and a lesser; but thou shalt have a just and a true weight,' &c., Deut. xxv. 13. Now surely not without cause doth the righteous Lord abhor false balances and weights, and such as use them; for what greater iniquity

almost can there be than to turn the measures of justice into the instruments of craft, whereby the poor are much pinched and all decayed? On the contrary side, 'An upright weight is acceptable to God. Just dealing in selling is a thing well-pleasing the Lord, whose favour is better than all the goods of the world. Wherefore, although they that use true weights get not so much worldly gain as they that use false, yet they have more wherein to rejoice, and indeed greater advantage another way than they that deal deceitfully in their weights or measures.

Ver. 2. *When pride cometh, contempt cometh also: but with the lowly is wisdom.*

Disdainfulness is the companion of pride, and wisdom of humility. The arrogant person never lightly cometh to any place but he striveth for the upper room, or sheweth some despising of those that are in his company; and as he despiseth others, so he is for his stateliness despised by others. 'But with the lowly is wisdom. With the humble and modest there is such reverent and prudent behaviour, that both men esteem them and advance them, and the Lord himself giveth them grace and favour. Thus there is wisdom with them; both honouring other, and honoured by other.

Ver. 3. *The uprightness of the just guideth them: but the frowardness of transgressors shall destroy them.*

A reward herein is promised to sincerity, or plain dealing; and, on the contrary side, frowardness and falsehood is threatened with a punishment. 'The uprightness of the just guideth them.' The sound dealing of the righteous bringeth unto them many good things, and leadeth them unto peace; yea, and to eternal life in the end, without going astray in error, or stumbling at the punishments of sin. 'But the frowardness (or unrighteousness) of transgressors shall destroy them;' for the perverseness of the wicked, wherein they have walked themselves, or whereby they have gone about to overthrow others, shall bring them to desolation, like buildings or cities broken down.

Ver. 4. *Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.*

Not only the treasures of iniquity, but riches lawfully gotten, profit nothing in the time of trouble or vengeance, seeing the Lord respecteth not the wealth

of any, nor will be stayed from executing justice by any gift, or corrupted with any bribe.

Ver. 5. *The righteousness of the just man directeth his way : but he that is wicked falleth in his wickedness.*

Righteousness not only delivereth from death, but prospereth a man throughout the whole course of his life ; for it directeth the way of the sincere-hearted man—that is, it holdeth him upright from falling into any error or misery, and maketh the path safe, sure, and plain for him to walk in. ‘But he that is wicked falleth in his wickedness.’ Who-soever transgresseth the holy law of God, or enterpriseth any evil action, is so crossed or plagued with one calamity or other, as that he may fitly be resembled to a traveller, who, walking or riding in some filthy or dangerous way, slideth into some pit, or falleth into some ditch. Thus the very sin which he doth, slayeth the evil-doer, and bringeth him in the end unto destruction.

Ver. 6. *The righteousness of the just delivereth them : but the deceitful are caught in their own mischief.*

As righteousness bringeth men to that which is good, so it freeth them from evil. Indeed, the innocent are often drawn into trouble by those that are cruel adversaries unto them. When this cometh to pass, then they begin to be troubled, and seeing all in a manner to forsake them, they fear that they shall always continue in adversity. Here, therefore, to comfort them, the Spirit of the Lord telleth them that even their own righteousness shall in the end set them free, and deliver them out of prison, from infamy, and from the edge of the sword. ‘But the deceitful are caught in their own mischief.’ The crafty being in great power and prosperity, through the just judgment of God, are oftentimes brought into trouble by those very practices which they have devised against others. The laws which they enact for the entrapping of the innocent, now and then take hold on themselves. The means whereby they go about to suppress the truth oftentimes further the same. Finally, the weapons which they prepare for the destruction of the godly, do commonly pierce their own hearts and sides.

Ver. 7. *When the wicked man dieth his expectation perisheth : the hope of his strength perisheth.*

The things wherein the wicked man putteth his trust and confidence are his riches and glory. This

outward prosperity he looketh long to enjoy, and hopeth that if any danger shall come, he shall be delivered from it thereby. But by death all this prosperity and abundance shall utterly be taken from him ; for the rich man, as it is in the psalm, ‘shall not take away anything with him when he dieth ; his glory shall not go down after him,’ Ps. xlix. 17. Now, when the righteous person shall see the proud rich man thus fall from all his hope, he shall say, as it is in another psalm, ‘Behold, this is he who made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and made himself strong in his substance,’ Ps. lii. 7.

Ver. 8. *The just man is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked man cometh in his stead.*

Such is the condition of the righteous person, that he commonly is first in some affliction. But if he be cast into prison, or molested with any trouble, he remaineth not always therein, but through the help of the Lord, is set at liberty at the last. This may then be a great comfort to the innocent, that they shall in the end be freed out of that trouble wherein the Lord suffereth them to continue for a season. Yet, as if this were not enough, behold another comfort, the wicked man cometh in his stead, his adversary falleth into the same, or like, or greater tribulation. He that rejoiced, mourneth, and he that vexed others wrongfully, is justly punished himself. Thus the Lord can easily turn the troubles of the righteous into triumphs, and the prosperity of the wicked into woeful misery.

Ver. 9. *The hypocrite corrupteth his neighbour with his mouth : but the just are preserved by knowledge.*

He is a hypocrite who, being wicked, or bearing ill-will, maketh an outward show of godliness and good-will. Such a one corrupteth his neighbour, dissuading him from that which is good, as from virtue and truth ; or persuading him to that which is evil, as to sin, or anything tending to his hurt. The weapon whereby the ungodly harm and destroy their neighbours, is their speech, which sometimes woundeth more deadly than any sword or arrow. The buckler, on the contrary side, whereby the just are preserved, is knowledge ; knowledge of the craft of the wicked, but especially knowledge of the Scriptures ; for this is of so great efficacy, that it maketh the godly to take heed of all flatterers and seducers.

Wherefore, if any would be safe from hypocrites or heretics, they must not only have zeal, but knowledge of the word of God.

*Ver. 10. For the prosperity of the just the city rejoiceth, and when the wicked are destroyed there is singing.*

Two things, as herein is shewed, do move the righteous unto joy. The one is, the honouring and good success of the just; for it is said, that 'for the prosperity of the just the city rejoiceth.' When it is well with those that do well, the well-disposed multitude cannot but be inwardly glad, and outwardly testify this inward joy by signs and tokens of mirth. The other thing that moveth the well-disposed to rejoice, and even to sing, is the destruction of the wicked; for it is said, that 'when the wicked are destroyed there is singing.' There is great cause why the people of God should rejoice at the vengeance which is executed on the ungodly; for they persecute the church, or infect many with their evil counsel and example, or draw God's punishments on the places wherein they live. Thus did the ancient Israelites rejoice in old time, when the enemies of God were overthrown; and thus did we of late sing and triumph when the proud popish Spaniards were drowned and confounded.

*Ver. 11. By the blessing of the righteous the city is exalted: by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.*

The commodity and discommodity which the city receiveth from the just on the one side, and the wicked on the other, is herein expressed. 'By the blessing of the righteous the city is exalted.' By the good deeds, good doctrines, good counsels, and good prayers of the just, which are their blessings, the societies of mankind are greatly benefited. 'By the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.' A kingdom is overthrown by the flattery, heresy, foolish counsel, and conspiracy of mischievous and ungodly persons. Thus a tongue can even build and overthrow a city, it can exalt and destroy a nation.

*Ver. 12. He that is void of understanding reproacheth his neighbour: but he that is prudent will keep silence.*

This sentence teacheth that the importunity of some is rather to be borne with patience than to be requited with speech of defamation. 'He that is void of understanding (such a one as is rash) reproach-

eth his neighbour.' Breaketh out into opprobrious speeches against him with whom he hath any dealing; for either he will object unto him some imperfection which he knoweth by him, or else will without cause revile him and shew some contempt of his person. 'But he that is prudent will keep silence.' Although one that is discreet be railed on by his adversaries, or spy some want in his friends, yet he will neither give taunt for taunt, neither shew any contempt, but rather behave himself as a deaf man toward the one, and as a dumb man toward the other; for the outrage of enemies is to be borne with patience, and the frailties of friends are to be covered with silence.

*Ver. 13. He that walketh as a tale-bearer revealeth a secret: but he that is of a faithful mind concealeth a matter.*

This proverb sheweth that we are not to acquaint every one with our intents or doings. A note to know a talker by, is that he is a walker from place to place, hearing and spying what he can, that he may have whereof to prattle to this body and that body. Such a gadder up and down can keep nothing, but discloseth the secret intents, speeches, and faults of those with whom he is acquainted, for which cause he is not to be trusted. On the contrary side, 'He that is of a faithful mind concealeth a matter.' Such a one as hath power over his affections, and loveth not only in show, but in truth, covereth those faults, purposes, words, and deeds of his friend, which with a good conscience may be kept close. This carrying of tales the Lord forbiddeth in his law, where he saith, 'Thou shalt not walk among thy people with reporting of tales,' Lev. xix. 16.

*Ver. 14. Where prudent counsels are not, the people perish: but in the multitude of counsellors there is health.*

This sentence teacheth that people are to provide and to pray for wise governors and counsellors; as also that they are dutifully to obey such, as upon whom their welfare chiefly dependeth. As the ship must needs perish wherein there is not a skilful pilot; so that commonwealth must needs decay wherein there is not a prudent or politic governor. On the contrary side, 'In the multitude of counsellors is health;' for the welfare of a commonwealth is



procured and preserved, not so much by a multitude of warriors, as of wise men, who by pondering of matters, and conferring about the same, give and set down such wholesome advice, from whence floweth health both of body and soul, and satisfy in time of danger and of war.

Ver. 15. *He that is surety for a stranger shall wholly be broken : but he that hateth those that clap hands is secure.*

The danger of rash suretyship is herein laid open, which point hath before been declared, chap. vi. 1. 'He that is surety for a stranger' (that rash person who promiseth to pay another man's debt, whatsoever he is) shall wholly be broken (utterly shall be undone :) but he that hateth those who clap hands (as for that wise man that misliketh such as rashly enter into suretyship, which commonly is done by clapping of the right hands) is secure ; he remaineth not only without trouble, but without fear of being molested.

Ver. 16. *A gracious woman keepeth honour ; and strong men keep riches.*

Albeit the woman is the weaker vessel, yet when she is gracious, that is to say, graced, not so much with beauty, as with wisdom and virtue, she keepeth honour, that is, maintaineth her credit, and preserveth her chastity. 'And strong men keep riches.' Likewise mighty men who are strong in body, hold fast their substance which they have gotten and earned by labour and travail. It were a hard thing to rob or spoil a strong man of his goods ; but to take away the chastity of an honest matron, be she never so weak, it is impossible, who will rather die a thousand deaths than be stained with the least speck of dishonesty.

Ver. 17. *The merciful man doth good to his own soul : but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.*

We are to preserve as much as in us lieth these two parts of our nature, our souls and our bodies. The merciful man is good to his own soul.' As he that doth good to others herein doth good to himself, inasmuch as the Lord will in mercy reward him for his well-doing ; so he that may truly be called a kind man, is kind to his own soul, in comforting his own heart, and in granting thereunto the delight which may be received by sleep, by food, and the use of all things necessary or pleasant. Wherefore

the counsel which the son of Sirach giveth is good and worthy to be followed : 'Love thy soul, and comfort thine heart, and put heaviness far away from thee.' Eccles. xxx. 21, &c. On the contrary side, 'He that is cruel, or hard-hearted, troubleth his flesh,' Eccles. iv ; for either by niggardliness, or travail, or sorrow, he pincheth, consumeth, or pineth his body. Such a cruel person, as the preacher speaketh, ceaseth not to labour, nor saith, For whom I do travail and deprive my soul of good things.

Ver. 18. *The wicked man worketh a deceitful work : but he that soweth righteousness hath a sure recompense.*

Although the ungodly person labour much, yet he doth a deceitful work, which neither shall continue, nor bring any fruit unto him. The hypocrite giveth alms oftentimes to be seen by men, but he shall never be rewarded for his liberality by the Lord. The transgressor of God's law buildeth himself, not upon the truth of obedience, but upon the show of an outward profession : such a house will fall. The vain teacher delivereth the straw and stubble of error and vanity for true doctrine and sound divinity. This work cannot abide ; the day will reveal it, and the fire will consume it. Thus every wicked man worketh a deceitful work. But on the contrary side, 'He that soweth righteousness hath a sure recompense.' For he that soweth sound doctrine, or the fruits of obedience, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Ver. 19. *The righteous man soweth to life : but he that followeth wickedness, to death.*

The wages of sin is death, but the grace of God is eternal life, Rom. vi. 23. Whereas it is said that the righteous man soweth to life ; the meaning is, that he which walking with a sincere heart, doth that which is good, shall inherit God's blessing and kingdom ; for godliness hath the promises both of this life and of the life to come. Whereas on the contrary side it is affirmed, that he which followeth wickedness soweth to death ; the meaning is, that the sinner, who with greediness followeth after evil, even as the hunter doth his game, shall of the flesh reap corruption, receiving for his ungodliness and iniquity temporal plagues and eternal punishment.

Ver. 20. *The froward in heart are abomination to the Lord : but the upright in way are acceptable to him.*

Some are not greatly wicked in their outward works who yet are inwardly corrupt, either suffering fond opinions or evil affections to reign in them. These are froward in heart, that is, unreformed in their souls. These are an abomination unto the Lord, that is to say, such whom he hateth and abhorreth, even as men do filthy or execrable things. But on the contrary side, 'The upright in way are acceptable to him,' that is to say, such as are not only sincere in heart, but have their conversation not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, please the Lord, as being regenerated by God's grace, and justified by Jesus Christ.

Ver. 21. *Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not escape scot-free : but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.*

Generation here is opposed to generation, and congregation, as it were, to congregation. The estate of the generation of the ungodly is declared in these words, 'Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.' The ungodly, though they be many and great, notwithstanding all their friends or aiders, shall be revenged and plagued. The estate of the generation of the godly is shewed in the latter part of this sentence, 'The seed of the righteous shall be delivered.' Although the faithful are for the time in great adversity and persecution, yet shall they in the end, by the wonderful power of God, escape out of danger and affliction, even in spite of their malicious and mighty adversaries.

Ver. 22. *As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman void of discretion.*

No gifts of nature or of the body are ornaments without wisdom. If a ring or jewel of gold were put about a swine's snout, so fair an ornament would not become so foul a creature. Moreover, the filthy sow would defile these precious things in the dirt, wherein she useth to dig and wallow. The wanton and wicked woman that is void of grace is more foul and brutish than any sow in the world; for she walloweth in the mire of unchastity, riot, scolding, pride, and such other vices. If, then, beauty be in her face, or brave attire on her head, how can these ornaments become her? Certainly the Lord thinketh her no more seemly than men do a sow that walloweth in the mire.

Ver. 23. *The desire of the just obtaineth that which is good : the hope of the wicked indignation.*

The righteous at the last obtain wished prosperity, whereas the ungodly meet with troubles and vengeance unlooked for. 'The desire of the just obtaineth that which is good.' The soul of the just is by the Lord filled with good blessings, as peace, plenty, wealth, and many suchlike. The hope of the wicked is turned into indignation. The expectation of the ungodly doth not only perish, but is so crossed, that the wrath and judgment of God befalleth it. See a fuller exposition hereof, chap. x. 28.

Ver. 24. *Some by scattering are the more increased ; and some sparing more than is meet, come to poverty.*

They do scatter that pour out their goods plentifully to the poor, or bestow great cost unto good uses. Such are the more increased; for, as the apostle speaketh, 2 Cor. ix. 10, 'He that giveth seed to the sower, and bread to eat, multiplieth their seed, and enlargeth the increase of the fruit of their righteousness.' The Lord himself requireth their liberality. Thus some give alms continually, entertain their friends often, and keep hospitality all the year long, and yet are not the poorer, but the richer. On the contrary side, some again there are who, sparing more than is meet, come to poverty. For divers of those who will not give a penny to those that stand in need, nor pay to ministers or magistrates those things that are due, prosper not, but go backward even in their worldly estate.

Ver. 25. *The liberal mind shall wax fat : and he that giveth plentifully shall pour forth.*

There is no cause why men should fear that, by bestowing their goods on good uses, they shall at last become beggars; for the liberal mind shall wax fat; the bountiful person shall not only grow rich, but become fat in goods and possessions. 'And he that giveth bountifully shall pour forth.' Moreover, he that abundantly refresheth and feedeth the needy with a great portion of his goods, shall be like to the springs or wells, which the more they are drawn, the more they abound with water; for he giveth and lendeth all the day long, and his see is full of blessings, as it is in the psalm, Ps. xxxvi 26.

Ver. 26. *The people will curse him that keepeth :*

*his corn ; but a blessing shall be on his head that selleth it.*

Corn is that precious seed of the earth whereby the life of man is preserved ; if that be wanting or kept back, such as lack it must needs perish. Not without cause, then, do the people curse him that keepeth in his wheat ; for whilst the covetous miser, under hope of greater gain, withholdeth the selling of wheat, or such necessary provision, for that he would sell it at the dearest price he can, the poor, that have nothing but what they buy in markets by their penny, famish. Thus, whilst some seek to make a private commodity, the commonwealth is undone, and a great number starve. It is lawful to keep in corn, but not in the time of extreme dearth, and with a covetous mind. On the contrary side, a blessing shall be on his head that selleth corn ; for both God will prosper him, and the people will wish God's blessing on his heart, who setteth corn, or any like provision, to sale in the time of dearth, and selleth it at a reasonable rate, whereby it cometh to pass that many poor and hungry souls are fed and preserved alive.

*Ver. 27. He that followeth after that which is good getteth good-will ; but to him that seeketh after evil it shall befall.*

This is a notable sentence. He is said to follow after that which is good, who so setteth himself to benefit the people among whom he liveth, either in their bodies, or goods, or souls, that he goeth about this even early in the morning, as the Hebrew word doth signify. Such a one getteth good-will ; for he winneth the people's hearts, and findeth God's favour. On the contrary side, he is said to seek after evil that bendeth himself in such sort to hurt or annoy any ; that in the night he deviseth or practiseth mischief. Such a one shall meet with hatred of men, or with some plague of the Lord.

*Ver. 28. He that trusteth in his riches shall fall ; but the just shall flourish as a branch.*

Riches are frail and transitory things. The man then that putteth confidence in his wealth, as if that could save him from troubles, or preserve him in happiness, shall fall ; for he that trusteth in riches, leaneth but on a broken reed, and therefore shall not be able to stand, but shall fall down from his prosperity and glory. On the contrary side, 'The

just shall flourish as a branch ;' for he that walketh uprightly, trusting in the Lord, shall be in a prosperous and flourishing estate, Ps. lii. 9. The reason is, for that he is nourished by a sound root, and standeth upon a sure foundation, Ps. xcii. 13.

*Ver. 29. He that troubleth his house shall inherit the wind ; and the fool shall be servant to the wise in heart.*

He is said to trouble his house that spendeth his goods prodigally, or suffereth them to waste for want of good husbandry. Such a one shall inherit the wind, that is to say, have nothing, and want food, money, and all necessaries ; for what remaineth to the miserable unthrift, when all his goods are spent and consumed, but that, that he feed himself and his with the wind ? Thus a man by prodigality is brought to extreme poverty, yea, to bondage also, as is declared in the latter part of this sentence ; for it is said, that 'the fool shall be servant to the wise in heart.' The unprovident person shall be constrained to sell himself to be a drudge to some rich man or other, who hath been a wiser householder than he.

*Ver. 30. The fruit of the righteous man is the fruit of a tree of life ; and he that is wise winneth souls.*

It is manifest that by the righteous man he is meant that practiseth not only justice or liberality, but all sorts of virtues. What is to be understood by 'the fruit of the righteous man' is somewhat doubtful ; for thereby either may be meant, the good which he doth to others, or the good which he receiveth from the Lord himself, who, as it is in the Revelation, will give to the faithful to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God, Rev. ii. 7. Truly they that are not only just themselves, but justify others, as Daniel speaketh, Dan. xii. 3, and that are not only wise, but instruct others, shall shine at the day of resurrection as the firmament, and as the stars of heaven, for ever and ever. But by that which here is spoken of the wise man, which is, that he winneth other men's souls, it may be gathered that by the fruit of the righteous man is not meant the reward which he shall receive himself, but the liberality, counsel, or good whatsoever which he imparteth to others. This is said to be 'the fruit of a tree of life,' because it quickeneth, saveth, and justifieth many, as the prophet speaketh. Thus the righteous man by

his righteousness doth much good, and again the wise man by his wisdom 'winneeth souls,' for by spiritual instructions and admonitions he converteth and comforteth the hearts of such as go astray or are weak. They that bring this to pass are called by our Saviour Christ fishers or catchers of men, Luke v. 10; whereunto the Lord make us wise by his Holy Spirit!

Ver. 31. *Behold, the just man shall be recompensed on the earth; how much more the wicked man and the sinner?*

This sentence is, as it were, a peerless pearl; it containeth the doctrine of the providence of God, and sheweth that there remaineth a day of judgment for the wicked. The matter which now we have to consider is not of small importance, for the Spirit of God biddeth us behold, that is to say, with the eyes of our mind very diligently to mark the point here taught, and the estate of the godly here on earth. The person whom we are to behold is the just man. There is none that is void of all sin, or that hath in this life attained to the perfection of all virtues. The Holy Ghost, then, speaketh not here of any that is simply just, but that is righteous in some respect, inasmuch as he is justified and sanctified, although he hath divers imperfections remaining in him. This just man shall be recompensed, that is to say, chastened, even for his frailties and infirmities; for judgment in this world must begin at God's house; yea, the just man is oftentimes so sorely scourged by the Lord that he is hardly saved. But where is the righteous person thus scourged, judged, and recompensed? On the earth, even in this life, and in this world. The earth is not that seat which the Lord hath properly appointed for judgment or vengeance, neither is this life the day of the great assize; yet rather than sin shall be unpunished, yea, even in the elect, the Lord will keep a petty sessions in this life, and make the earth a house of correction, 1 Pet. iv. 18. But where then shall the wicked and the ungodly appear? If they that walk in the obedience of the spirit are so sharply corrected for their sins, how much more shall the wicked man, even the profane person and the sinner, the notorious unrepentant offender, be plagued, either in this life or the world to come?

## CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1. *He that loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth correction is brutish.*

Here is shewed that adversity is the best universality. 'He that loveth instruction,' that person who joyfully receiveth admonitions, profiteth thereby, 'loveth knowledge,' waxeth daily more learned and more godly; 'but he that hateth correction,' as for him that cannot abide either the reproofs of the godly, or the Lord's corrections and scourges, 'he is brutish'—he remaineth as a brute-beast in his error and rudeness. For by reason that neither the rebukes of men, nor the rods of the Lord, prevail with him, he neither seeth his sins, nor the vanity of this life, nor the righteousness of the Lord, as he ought to do.

Ver. 2. *The favour of the Lord advanceth the good man: but he condemneth the wicked person.*

As a judge will exalt the well-doer, and pronounce the sentence of condemnation on the malefactor, so God will bless the innocent, and curse the ungodly, upon whom he will both pronounce and execute the decree of some temporal plague, or of eternal destruction. By the favour of the Lord, grace is meant, the fruit whereof is peace. There is none simply good but God; yet they that walk uprightly are said to be good, inasmuch as they are made partakers of God's goodness. Unto such there is no condemnation, as there is to the wicked, that is to say, to the reprobate, who are abominable in their thoughts and deeds, who wax daily more and more wicked and miserable, until they receive eternal condemnation, as a most just and perfect reward of their iniquity.

Ver. 3. *A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be removed.*

As a wise gardener will pluck up the weeds in his ground, but will not touch the roots of the good herbs to hurt them, so the Lord will destroy the wicked as plants which he never planted, but will spare, yea, preserve the godly, as founded and grounded on Christ Jesus. Whereas it is said that a man shall not be established by wickedness, the meaning is, that although the evil person go about by all means to strengthen himself, or his pos-

terity, yet he shall not continue. By the root of the righteous their state is meant, which is always sure, though it be often shaken with the troubles of this life.

Ver. 4. *A virtuous wife is her husband's crown: but she that shameth him is as rottenness in his bones.*

She is said to be a virtuous wife who, fearing God, loveth also her husband, and not only liveth chastely, but followeth her vocation diligently. Such a woman is her husband's crown or garland, that is to say, a comfort and a glory to him; for she not only preserveth his health, but increaseth his wealth and dignity. That woman shameth her husband, who, by her frowardness, unchastity, or some like vice, causeth him to blush, and worketh him grief. Such a wife is as rottenness in his bones, that is to say, is an inward or deadly corse unto him; for the disease or worm that eateth the flesh, or sucketh up the blood, is not such a torment as the ache of the bones, or the corruption of the marrow.

Ver. 5. *The thoughts of the just are right: the subtle devices of the wicked are deceit.*

There is great difference between the regenerate and unregenerate concerning the very inward cogitations and affections of their hearts. 'The thoughts of the just are right.' The upright man bendeth his study how most to glorify God, benefit his neighbour, and to stir up himself to do that which is good. He judgeth himself, and taketh care that none be wronged, but that every one have his due. 'But the devices of the wicked are deceit.' The ungodly muse on mischief, bending their wits by craft to circumvent them, whom by force or violence they cannot oppress, and thinking how best to colour their own devilish practices.

Ver. 6. *The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood: the mouth of the upright delivereth them.*

The ungodly abuse their tongues unto evil, which the righteous use aright. 'The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood;' the questions, conferences, and speeches of the ungodly tend to catch the innocent even unto destruction: 'But the mouth of the upright delivereth them.' The godly will preserve, by their pleadings or answers, such as the wicked go about to slay. Thus the speech of the ungodly is a snare, which yet is broken by the mouth of the well-disposed.

Ver. 7. *God doth overthrow the wicked so as that they are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand.*

When a change of the estate of the ungodly is made from prosperity unto adversity, their utter destruction is commonly wrought; for their house being built upon the sand, the tempests and the winds arise and quite overthrow it. The whole manner of the overthrow of the wicked man is at large described in the book of Job, chap. xviii. 15, where it is said, 'He so dwelleth in his tent, that he hath no hope; brimstone is scattered over his habitation. His roots are dried up beneath, and his bough above is hewn down. His memory perisheth from the earth, and he hath no name in the streets. He is driven from the light into darkness, and cast out of the earth inhabited. Neither hath he son nor nephew among his people, neither is any remaining in his habitation. They that come after are astonished at the day of his doom, and they that are present quake for horror. Truly these are the tabernacles of the wicked man, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God.' On the contrary side, not only the righteous man himself, but his house, his dwelling-place, his family, and his children, shall long continue.

Ver. 8. *A man shall be commended for his prudent mouth: but he that is of a froward heart shall be despised.*

Certain causes, both of estimation and contempt, are herein shewed. 'A man shall be commended for his prudent mouth.' A man shall be praised for his wise speech, wherein, by instructing or counselling others, he uttereth and expresseth the understanding of his heart. 'But he that is of a froward heart shall be despised.' As for him, who either is so ignorant that he cannot speak wisely, or so overthwart that he uttereth only those things that are cross or evil, he becometh contemptible by this means.

Ver. 9. *Better is he that debaseth himself and hath a servant, than he that boasteth himself and wanteth bread.*

That person who, setting his hand to all works, and carrying a low port, hath somewhat about him, and one to do his business, is more to be commended, and in better estate, than he who, carrying the countenance of a great gentleman, ruffeth it out in brave apparel, but hath not a penny in his purse, yea, nor sometimes food sufficient to put in his belly. Thus much is meant when it is said, 'Better is he that

debaseth himself and hath a servant,' that is, is able to maintain a family, 'than he that boasteth himself and wanteth bread.' The son of Sirach, who may well be called an interpreter of this book of the Proverbs, hath a very like saying to this, where he speaketh thus, 'Better is he that worketh and aboundeth with all things, than he that boasteth himself, and wanteth bread,' Ecclus. x. 30.

Ver. 10. *The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast : but the bowels of the wicked are cruel.*

Pity is now commended, and hardness of heart condemned. 'The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast.' A just man will not hurt the dumb creature which he possesseth, either by overtoiling it or suffering it to want food, or looking to. But if he be so pitiful to his beast, much more to the bodies and souls of men. As for the very bowels of the wicked, they are cruel; for the ungodly are unmerciful to the dumb creatures, unnatural to their children, hard-hearted to the poor, and bloody persecutors of the people of God, delighting in their destruction, and laughing at their torments.

Ver. 11. *He that tilleth his ground shall be satisfied with bread : but he that followeth rain companions is void of understanding.*

Seeing this sentence is afterward at large expounded, chap. xxviii. 19, it were a needless labour here to handle it.

Ver. 12. *The wicked man desireth a defence against evils : but the root of the righteous giveth fruit.*

That which the ungodly person feareth shall befall him, but that which he desireth shall not come unto him. 'The wicked man,' the grievous sinner and unrepentant transgressor, 'desireth a defence against evils;' wisheth and seeketh, howbeit all in vain, a refuge and protection against miseries and calamities. 'But the root of the righteous giveth fruit.' As for the estate of the godly, such it is, as that they are not only preserved from evils, but flourish and prosper in good things.

Ver. 13. *The snare of the evil man is in the transgression of his lips, but the just man escapeth out of trouble.*

As the speech of the wicked man is oftentimes a snare wherein he catcheth others to destruction, so it is a net wherein he himself is sometimes so entangled that he cannot by any means come out of

it. Thus much is meant when it is said, that 'the snare of the evil man is in the transgression of his lips.' On the contrary side, 'The just man escapeth out of trouble.' For although the innocent, by false accusations, are sometimes brought into question or molested, yet they are freed at last and escape, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, or as a poor beast from the net of the hunter.

Ver. 14. *A good man is satisfied with the fruit of his mouth : and the work of a man's hands shall reward him.*

Albeit, the opening of the mouth is a small matter, yet, when it is done in wisdom, it shall be recompensed by the Lord with great blessing. For such as use their tongues to God's glory, and the edification of their brethren, instructing them and exhorting them from day to day, shall be loved by God and man, and taste many good things. Thus much is taught when it is said, that a 'good man is satisfied with the fruit of his month.' Now, as good words, so good works also shall be rewarded. For the recompense of a man's hands shall reward him, that is to say, not only the wicked shall be plagued for their ill-doing, but the godly shall be blessed for their well-doing. The reward here spoken of is not a reward of merit, but of mercy to the godly, whose good actions are crowned with comfort and good success, as the evil deeds of the wicked have a curse and cross attending on them.

Ver. 15. *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes : but he that hearkeneth to counsel is wise.*

Self-liking is herein reproved, and hearkening to advice is commended. 'The way of a fool is right in his own eyes.' The conceited person, imagining himself to be a very wise man when he is a fool, thinketh his own course best, using no advice of others, as if he himself were sufficient of himself to see what is best for himself. 'But he that hearkeneth to counsel is wise;' that is to say, he that, suspecting his own judgment, inquireth after, and practiseth the good advice of others, provideth well for himself, and by hearing, becometh wiser and wiser.

Ver. 16. *The wrath of a fool is made known the same day, but a prudent man covereth a reproach.*

As the foolish man is soon angry, so he doth betray the passion of his mind very quickly by his

outreries, threatenings, and suchlike signs of choler. Thus much is signified when it is said, 'The wrath of a fool is made known the same day.' Whereas it is added, that 'the prudent man covereth a reproach;' the meaning is, that he which is wise suppresseth all angry speeches and behaviour, and by silence passeth over the disgrace offered unto him by his adversary, not revenging but hiding it, as if he had suffered no abuse.

Ver. 17. *A faithful man will speak, he will declare that which is just: but a false witness uttereth deceit.*

Among other properties of love, the apostle Paul noteth these two, that 'it rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth in the truth,' 1 Cor. xiii. 6. To the same effect speaketh Solomon in this verse. For first he affirmeth of such a faithful man, who believeth in God and truly loveth his neighbour, that 'he will declare that which is just.' Whereby he meaneth, that without respect of persons, the upright man will testify that which is agreeable to the matter, and that which is certain, whereby the hearers and the judge may be directed and led to know and embrace the truth. 'But a false witness uttereth deceit;' that is to say, he that maketh no conscience of lying, no, not in the place of judgment, coloureth his forged accusations with plausible speeches, and faceth down an untruth.

Ver. 18. *There are some that utter words like the pricking of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is a medicine.*

The cutting of the body with the edge of the sword doth not wound so deeply or dangerously, as the pricking of it with the point thereof. Whereas, then, here it is said that the words of some are like the prickings of a sword; the meaning is, that they are most piercing and deadly. David felt such inward prickings when he said, 'They pierce my soul, whilst they say unto me, Where is now thy God.' Ps. xlii. He is no less a murderer that killeth a man with a word, than he that slayeth him with a sword; yea, sometimes it is a point of greater cruelty to spot man's good name than to shed his blood. Now, as in the former part of this parable is taught, that some by words hurt their neighbours most grievously, in body, goods, and name; so whereas it is added, that 'the tongue of the wise man is a medicine;' herein is declared, that the godly by their

wholesome speeches, as it were by certain salves or treacles, cure the wounds of afflicted hearts, and drive away the poison infused by evil tongues.

Ver. 19. *The lip of truth shall be established for ever: the lying tongue scant for the space of a moment.*

Truth, which is uttered by the lips of the godly, is firm and stable. For although it is suppressed for a time, yet at the last it prevaileth and abideth for ever. The utterer of truth, meant here by the lip of truth, shall likewise remain for ever; for he that speaketh the truth from his heart shall either live long in this world, or for ever in the world to come. On the contrary side, 'The lying tongue endureth scant for the space of a moment,' for God will quickly destroy all those that speak lies, and root out the false tongue out of the land of the living.

Ver. 20. *Deceit shall be unto the heart of the practisers of mischief: but joy unto the counsellors of peace.*

Evil counsel most hurteth those that give it. By deceit here is meant a deceitful reward, or an issue of a matter deceiving a man's expectation. Such as are the authors of evil, here called 'the practisers or devisers of mischief,' commonly miss of their purpose, or meet with some trouble that worketh sorrow in their hearts. 'But joy shall be unto the counsellors of peace;' for such as either make concord between neighbour and neighbour, or give any advice tending to their brethren's welfare, are blessed and find good success.

Ver. 21. *No evil shall befall the just man: but the wicked shall be full of misery.*

Not so much as a thorn shall hurt the good man's foot. Indeed many are the tribulations of the righteous, but all their adversities turn unto their good. Moreover when God plagueth the world for sin, he passeth over the innocent, neither doth any of his strokes fall upon him. 'But the wicked shall be full of misery.' Not one, but many troubles shall take hold on the ungodly, for they shall be filled with infamy, poverty, heart-grief, and infinite molestations and plagues.

Ver. 22. *Deceitful lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal faithfully are accepted of him.*

By deceitful lips they are meant who seek to deceive, and do not perform that which they say or promise. They deal faithfully whose deed is as

good as their word, and who use no deceit in either of them both. The former sort not only displease men, but highly offend God; the latter not only please the Lord, but are deeply in his favour; howsoever, men oftentimes make small account of them, for flattery getteth friends, but truth getteth hatred.

Ver. 23. *A prudent man hideth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth folly.*

In this verse silence is commended, as a virtue whereby both knowledge and folly is wisely covered, and babbling is condemned, as a vice by which wisdom and foolishness is unadvisedly laid open. 'A prudent man hideth knowledge,' that is to say, he that is wary or circumspect neither boasteth of his cunning, neither speaketh of any good matters out of time or place. 'But the heart of fools proclaimeth folly,' that is to say, fools either speak of good things unseasonably, or talk of vain things continually. In it is, and out it must; they can keep no counsel. Their heart being full of foolish thoughts and vanities, provoketh them to publish and utter the same by rash and indiscreet speeches, having no power at all to keep close, or to suppress such fancies and follies.

Ver. 24. *The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the idle shall pay tribute.*

Before we have heard, chap. x. 4, how labour bringeth men unto wealth. And now in the former part of this sentence is affirmed, that it advanceth them also to honour; for it is said, 'The hand of the diligent shall bear rule,' whereby is shewed that the following of a man's calling faithfully and painfully, will not only bring them to wealth, but to such preferment, that they shall bear some office in the place wherein they live. On the contrary side, 'The idle shall pay tribute;' for sloth bringeth men not only to poverty, but to bondage. The idle are driven to go to service, and to be subject to the diligent and the rich.

Ver. 25. *Heaviness in the heart of man presseth it down: but a good word rejoiceth it.*

In the former part of this verse the force of sorrow or care is shewed to be exceeding great; for it is said that 'heaviness in the heart of man presseth it down,' that is to say, immoderate pensiveness both fretteth the mind, and so weakeneth and dulleth the body, that it is unfit to labour or any good

work. 'But a good word rejoiceth' or cheereth 'it up;' for the comfortable speech of a friend, but especially the wholesome word of God, wherein remission of sins is promised through Christ, expelleth heaviness of the heart, and instead thereof raiseth joy therein, whereby both the soul is refreshed, and all the senses of the body revived and made fit to discharge their duty.

Ver. 26. *The righteous man is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked deceiveth them.*

This sentence declareth that, above all things, righteousness is to be embraced and followed after, whereby a certain excellency is attained. 'The righteous man is more excellent than his neighbour' in many respects; first, His birth is more noble, for he is born again of the word and of the Spirit; secondly, His deeds are more commendable; thirdly, His death is sweeter; last of all, His life is more blessed, in regard of God's favour toward him, and the good success which he findeth in his affairs. In this respect especially the just man is here said to be more excellent than the unjust. This may be gathered by that it is said in the latter part of this sentence, 'But the way of the wicked deceiveth them;' for hereby is meant, that howsoever the ungodly go about to excel, yet their prosperity being in the end turned into adversity, they feel, by woful experience, their pleasures and glory to be but vain and inconstant.

Ver. 27. *The deceitful man shall not roast that which he hath caught by hunting: but he that is diligent (shall enjoy) the precious substance of a man.*

Goods ill-gotten will not long continue. 'The deceitful man shall not roast that which he caught by hunting,' or his venison. The crafty person shall not long enjoy nor taste the prey which he hath gotten by fraud; for either one trouble or other will so come upon him, that he shall not be able long to possess or take delight in the spoil. I remember a true story which I have heard of, and which was done not very many years ago, by setting down whereof some light may be brought to this saying, and men may be warned to take heed of stealing, seeing therein they may see the swift flight of stolen goods. A butcher there was who



had stolen an ox, which, marrying within a while after the deed was done, he caused to be dressed on his wedding-day, and bade his friends to the feast, purposing to feed and cheer up both himself and them with other good cheer, and with this unhappy venison gotten by unlawful hunting. Whilst the venison was roasting, vengeance elsewhere was preparing, and the owner of the ox finding out the thief, and pursuing the wrong done unto him, caused the butcher on the very wedding-day to be apprehended, who, as I think, was afterwards for this fact executed. Thus many things fall between the cup and the lip, and the mouth tasteth not, at the least long or with any joy, that which the hand pulleth by hook and by crook unlawfully. 'But he that is diligent shall enjoy the precious substance of a man;' for he that, by honest and painful labour,getteth goods unto himself without wronging of any, shall possess them safely and surely, and enjoy them peaceably and comfortably a long time together. The diligent person shall possess his corn, his silver, his jewels, and such other precious things that are in account among men, which here are called the precious substance of a man.

Ver. 28. *In the way of righteousness is life: and in the pathway thereof there is no death.*

Sundry precious and pleasant fruits springing from righteousness have already been set down in this book. In this verse is shewed that prosperity and salvation belong unto it, and that adversity and damnation are far from it. 'In the way of righteousness is life.' They that embrace and practise the will of God, and walk after the Spirit, enjoy peace of heart, prosperity in this life, and many blessings. Thus there are many good things in the way of righteousness, and as is shewed in the latter part of this sentence, there is no condemnation or evil unto those that are in Christ, who walketh not after the flesh but after the Spirit: 'For in the pathway thereof there is no death.' They that walk in the obedience of the Lord's commandments, neither are troubled with fear, nor confounded with shame, nor vexed with sorrow, nor ever taste of eternal damnation, but shall in the end be crowned with immortality through Jesus Christ. To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1. *A wise son (hearkeneth) to the instruction of his father: but a scorner heareth no rebuke.*

This holy proverb teacheth that children are to obey their parents. 'A wise son,' a reverent child, that knoweth and feareth God, 'hearkeneth to the instruction of his father,' heareth and obeyeth the counsel and advice of his parents; 'but a scorner,' that is, one that is stubborn and lewd, 'heareth no rebuke,' cannot abide to be checked or controlled.

Ver. 2. *A good man eateth the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of transgressors violence.*

A man shall be recompensed not only according to his deeds, but according to his words. 'A good man eateth the fruit of his mouth.' He that speaketh to the glory of God, or the edification of his neighbour, shall receive good-will of men, and God's blessings, as a reward of his gracious speeches. The fruit which the soul of transgressors shall reap and feed upon is violence; for such as break God's laws, or abuse their tongues to lying, slandering, blasphemy, or suchlike vices, shall reap God's curse, the anguish of soul and conscience, hatred, wounds, and fruits of law.

Ver. 3. *He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life: but destruction shall be unto him that openeth his lips wide.*

It is a good thing to bridle the tongue, or to use moderation in speech. 'He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life.' He that setteth a watch before his lips, and shutteth the door of his mouth, not speaking but when he ought, and what is meet, preserveth not his body only, but his soul, from those harmless and deadly dangers which they that talk unadvisedly incur, drawing on themselves by this means oftentimes, not only hatred, but extreme misery; for, as it followeth in the latter part of this sentence, destruction shall be to him that openeth his lips wide,' that is to say, as concerning him whose mouth, as a common strumpet, spreadeth itself to all filthy communication, or openeth itself to talk lavishly, he shall be sure to meet with much trouble, and in the end he shall be quite overthrown.

Ver. 4. *The sluggard lusteth, and yet his soul hath nought: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.*

Wishers and woulders are never good householders. The idle wish sometimes for raiment, sometimes for money, sometimes for food, but all in vain. 'The sluggard lusteth, and yet his soul hath nothing.' The slothful person being very hungry, desireth food, but yet his belly is empty and pinched with famine. 'But the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.' As for the belly of the painful man, it shall be filled with dainties, and pleasant meats and drinks. In one word, idleness is the mother of want and famine, labour of plenty and abundance.

Ver. 5. *The just man hateth a false matter, and causeth the wicked man to stink, and to be ashamed.*

The righteous person, as herein is shewed, not only setteth himself against sin, but the sinner. 'The just man hateth a false matter.' The upright person not only loveth truth, but detesteth lying and an ill cause, even as a foul or filthy thing that is to be abhorred. 'And he causeth the wicked man to stink, and to be ashamed.' Moreover, he zealously pursueth the malicious, unrepentant evil-doer, complaining on him, or punishing him in such sort that he maketh him odious and infamous, and bringeth him unto miserable and woeful confusion.

Ver. 6. *Righteousness preserveth the upright in way : but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.*

The ungodly attempt many things against the just, going about to overthrow them. In the mean season the godly walk in the way of the Lord, neither declining to the right hand nor to the left. This upright course which they keep, keepeth them. They need not any buckler or castle for their defence. Righteousness alone preserveth the way of the upright. It keepeth them from those evils which vices bring upon men. Thus much is taught in the former part of this sentence. The doctrine of the latter part thereof is no less true and plain ; for whereas it is said that wickedness overthroweth the sinner, herein is manifestly declared, that the sinner, by his own evil course of life, draweth misery and destruction upon himself ; for which cause he is not to blame the Lord, or any mortal man besides himself, inasmuch as he is the author of misery to himself.

Ver. 7. *Some boast themselves to be rich, when they have nothing : others feign themselves to be poor, when they have great substance.*

Divers men take divers courses concerning their estate. 'Some boast themselves to be rich when they have nothing.' Divers that are poor indeed make a show of great wealth ; for though they have little or nothing, or be in debt, yet they go bravely apparelled, and keep a great port. 'Others feign themselves poor when they have great substance.' Some, when they are worth hundreds of thousands, complain of great want, and go and fare so barely as if they were not worth a groat. The former sort boast of the wealth which they have not, to win the more credit and estimation. The latter make show of want or poverty to avoid payments, charges, and the greater dangers.

Ver. 8. *The riches of a man are the ransom of his life ; but a poor man heareth not rebuke.*

There is some help in wealth to deliver out of trouble. Oftentimes 'the riches of a man are the ransom of his life.' Substance is that whereby a man imprisoned or held captive is now and then set free and redeemed. 'But a poor man heareth not rebuke.' He that hath nothing, sustaineth not nor is able to resist the reproof or sentence of condemnation. He that hath no money must pay in his body. Indeed, oftentimes the poor man is not called into question, because he hath nothing, when the rich man is troubled and brought into danger of life. And for that he knoweth that few or none will pursue him or lay hold on him, seeing his enemies shall gain nothing by him ; he feareth not the summons of the court, neither doth he dread the voice of the crier, neither is he terrified with the fierce eyes of the judge. But let him once be pricked at by the mighty, or hotly pursued by the envious, and he shall pay his head for that which the rich man shall easily answer with his purse.

Ver. 9. *The light of the righteous shall rejoice : but the candle of the wicked shall be put out.*

The prosperity of the just is here compared unto the light of the sun, which, rejoicing to run his course, continueth firm from time to time in the sky. The welfare of the godly shall increase, and remain constant after the same manner, 'but the candle of the wicked shall be put out,' the pomp and flourishing of the wicked shall quickly decay, Job xviii. 6 for as a candle shineth indeed bright, but soon cor

sumeth, so their glory seemeth excellent, but in a short time vanisheth.

Ver. 10. *Through mere pride a man maketh contention: but with the well-advised is wisdom.*

The cause or fountain, as well of strife as peace, is here opened and declared. 'Through mere pride a man maketh contention.' The conceit of a man's own excellency breedeth in him a stomach and contempt of others; maketh his affections fierce, and emboldeneth him to contend with his neighbours. 'But with the well-advised is wisdom.' As for those that follow the advice of God's word or Spirit, they are indued with that wisdom which is peaceable, whereby they avoid all occasions of strife; yea, whereby sometimes they pacify wrath that is kindled.

Ver. 11. *Substance gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth with the hand shall increase wealth.*

A wise man is to take care, not so much how much he getteth, as how well he getteth goods; for 'substance gotten by vanity shall be diminished.' Riches attained unto by unlawful means shall not prosper, but wax less and less. 'But he that gathereth with the hand shall increase wealth.' That person who getteth anything with honest labour and by good means shall thrive in this world, and daily grow richer and richer.

Ver. 12. *The hope which is deferred maketh the heart sick: but a desire, when it cometh, is a tree of life.*

This verse sheweth the danger or hurt of delay, and the comfort of present good things. By *hope* the thing hoped for is meant, whether it be some comfortable news, or any acceptable thing whatsoever. Even as food long kept from the hungry stomach maketh the body weak, so the thing longed for prolonged causeth a fainting soul; for the mind, wanting the thing expected, grieveth because it doth not presently enjoy it, and feareth that it shall never obtain it. 'But a desire, when it cometh, (or which is present,) is a tree of life;' for the sight or receiving of the good thing which hath been earnestly wished for, healeth the malady of the heart, and reviveth the spirits.

Ver. 13. *He that despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that reverenceth the law shall have peace.*

It is not good to contemn the commandments of

princes, much less of God. 'He that despiseth the word shall be destroyed.' That person who contemptuously rejecteth the commandment of the almighty God, or will by no means be subject thereunto, shall be plagued at the last with some fearful punishment. 'But he that reverenceth (or feareth) the law shall have peace.' Whosoever, trembling at God's word, putteth it reverently and dutifully into practice, shall enjoy prosperity.

Ver. 14. *The doctrine of a wise man is a well-spring of life, to depart from the snares of death.*

This sentence declareth that the precepts of the learned and godly wise bring unto the younger and ruder sort great profit. By the doctrine of the wise man, his counsel, which he giveth to those with whom he hath occasion to deal, is meant. This counsel is said to be a well-spring of life, because it is a means whereby those that obey it are made partakers of many good things. Now, because it is also a means that many avoid the dangers and miseries of this present life, yea, and that they are preserved from sin and eternal destruction, it is added, that it serveth likewise to depart from the snares of death.

Ver. 15. *Grace giveth good success; but the way of the deceitful is rough.*

By grace, such gracious behaviour is meant as serveth and winneth favour among men, and is also acceptable to God. Such grace giveth good success; for prudence bringeth matters happily to pass, and favour easily obtaineth things desired. 'But the way of the deceitful (or as the word doth also signify, of despisers, who are themselves commonly despised) is rough. For they that, wanting the grace of God, either by reason of their craft, or any other vice, are in disgrace and despised, lead a life full of troubles, and as it were walk in a way which is rugged or full of thorns, inasmuch as both the Lord is wont to cross such, and all sorts of people to molest them and vex them, in their courses and enterprises.

Ver. 16. *Every wise man worketh with knowledge; but a fool layeth open his folly.*

Prudence is now commended again, and foolishness condemned. 'Every wise man worketh with knowledge.' Every one that is prudent doth his affairs discreetly, not only setting down the means

of attaining his enterprises, or the order of his courses, but forecasting the issues, and preventing the hindrances of his attempts. 'But a fool layeth open his folly.' On the contrary side, he that is unskilful or indiscreet, goeth rashly and rawly about all things, and by his rude and imperfect works, betrayeth and layeth open his own ignorance and vanity.

Ver. 17. *A wicked messenger falleth into evil; but a faithful ambassador healeth.*

Trusty and unfaithful dealing in messages is now spoken of. 'A wicked messenger falleth into evil.' He that doth his errand slothfully or guilefully not only much grieveth others, but hurteth himself, drawing by this means on himself both his master's displeasure and God's judgment. On the contrary side, 'a faithful ambassador healeth.' A trusty messenger freeing his master's mind from fears and griefs, so healeth the malady thereof, even as a physician cureth the diseases of the body; for he not only doeth good to himself by reporting the truth, but unto others, and especially to his master, to whom he bringeth true and glad tidings.

Ver. 18. *Poverty and shame shall be unto him that forsaketh instruction; but he that regardeth correction shall be honoured.*

The Spirit of God herein sheweth the fruit of chastisement either received or despised. Two greater outward evils there are not than poverty and shame; for poverty causeth a man to starve, and infamy maketh him hide his head. Yet even these two miseries usually befall him as just rewards who forsaketh instruction. For such a one as despiseth or disobeyeth the voice of his instructors, commonly either cometh to want, or committeth something for which he is put to open shame. 'But he that regardeth correction shall be honoured.' For such a one as yieldeth to wholesome advice, and profiteth by chastisements, attaineth usually to wisdom, and so to preferment.

Ver. 19. *The desire that is present is pleasant to the soul; but it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil.*

With great joy of heart do men enjoy their pleasures, and with no less grief do they part from them. 'The desire present is pleasant to the soul.' The obtaining of the thing desired, be it never so

vain or unlawful a delight, is a sweet and very comfortable thing to the mind and affection. 'But it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil.' It is a deadly grief to the wicked to be pulled from their vain delights, be they never so sinful. They will rather lose heaven than forego their ungodly pleasures.

Ver. 20. *He that walketh with the wise shall be the wiser; but he that keepeth company with fools shall be the worsor.*

There is great force in the company which a man keepeth, to change him either unto the better or the worse. He is said to walk with the wise who is often in their company, to hear their words, and to see their behaviour; such a one waxeth wiser, that is to say, more learned and wary than he was before. 'But he that keepeth company with fools shall be the worsor.' As for him that joineth in fellowship with the ungodly, he shall be infected thereby with some evil, and corrupted by their ill example.

Ver. 21. *Evil pursueth sinners; but that which is good rewardeth the just.*

Punishment is the companion of unrighteousness. By evil is meant the punishment of sin, but especially the check and sting of an evil conscience; for the vainest man is more punished with his own conceits than with the severe proceedings of courts. As evil pursueth sinners, so that which is good rewardeth the just. For God's blessing, as a reward, not of merit, but of mercy, maketh a recompense to the upright person for all his pains in doing of his duty.

Ver. 22. *The good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children; and the sinner's goods are laid up for the just.*

This sentence declareth that righteousness not only causeth a man's own goods to be stable, and to remain in his family, but draweth also unto him the riches of others. 'The good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children.' The godly person not only himself enjoyeth his goods whilst he liveth, but when he dieth leaveth the same to his children, in such sort as that also their children, through God's mercy, inherit the same. Again, 'The sinner's goods are laid up for the just man.' The wicked man is so far off from leaving his goods to his posterity, as that by God's providence they are oftentimes rolled from

him upon the righteous person, who is his heir, as it were, against his will. Thus the goods of the prodigal youth come to the thrifty, good husband; the revenues of the rebel to the chest of the prince; and the treasures of the miser to the hands of the liberal giver.

*Ver. 23. Much food is in the ground of the poor which is new tilled; but some are consumed by indiscretion.*

Be the ground never so barren or unaccustomed to be ploughed, it will yield the poor tiller thereof good increase, if that he bestow labour enough upon it, and sow his seed in due season. Neither only doth the husbandman by skill and diligence cause his ground, through God's blessing, to be fruitful; but every man, by wisdom and painfulness in his calling, enricheth himself and getteth his living. This much is meant when here it is said, 'Much food is in the ground of the poor which is new tilled.' Now, again, on the contrary side, some are consumed by indiscretion or negligence; for many a one, who hath a good stock and fruitful ground, by neglecting labour, and not ordering things aright, wasteth all that he hath, and cometh greatly behind-hand in his worldly estate.

*Ver. 24. He that spareth his rod hateth his child: but he that loareth him chasteneth him betimes.*

The duty of children hath often before in this book been declared. Now in this sentence the duty of parents is touched. 'He that spareth his rod,' the cockering father, who seldom or never correcteth his son, 'hateth his child;' is an enemy to him, if not in affection, yet in action, seeing he doth that which is contrary to his welfare; for foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it out. Wherefore the letting pass of chastisement hindereth the well-doing of the child. It is not enough to rebuke him by words, but he must of necessity be now and then corrected with stripes, yet not with a great staff or sword, but with a rod. 'He that loveth him chasteneth him betimes,' or hasteneth instruction to him. Fond fathers and mothers think love to consist in cockering their children, and winking at their faults; but their true and pure love indeed is seen in providing a teacher to instruct them, and twigs to correct them; for the rod and correction give wisdom, but

a child left to himself shameth his mother. Now it is diligently to be observed that such a word is used in the Hebrew text, whereby is declared that the careful and wise father, early in the morning, seeketh the means of instructing and chastening his son. For this phrase or kind of speech admonisheth parents, not only to procure the means of their children's welfare whilst they are young, and whilst there is hope of them, but to do this before all other matters, and, as it were, as soon as they rise out of their beds. The Lord be then merciful unto us for neglect of this duty; for if we have any worldly business to do, we go first about that, and then teach and instruct our children at our leisure. The hawks and hounds, the oxen and the horses, are better looked to and trained up commonly than our children. Oh reachless carelessness about the chiefest matters! Oh that, as we use to feed our children in the morning, so we could once be brought to instruct them also betimes!

*Ver. 25. The righteous man eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.*

There is no cause why any that fear the Lord should take carping care for food in this present life; for such as seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof shall have either plenty, or that which is sufficient. The righteous man not only eateth, but to the satisfying of his soul. Indeed, now and then God suffereth his servants to be in some want, which he doth to try them. But often it is to be seen that the true worshippers of God, who practise obedience to his laws, are so blessed by him that their table is furnished, and their cup doth overflow. On the contrary side, 'The belly of the wicked doth want.' For as they earn nothing, and deserve nothing, so they starve and suffer hunger. The idle vagabonds, the pilfering thieves, the dissolute wantons, yea, and the greedy misers, endure famine oftentimes, whilst the faithful and the diligent enjoy store of all necessaries, and comfortably feed themselves at tables well furnished. Thus godliness hath the promises and rewards both of this life and of the life to come.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1. *A wise woman buildeth up her house, but a foolish woman pulleth it down with her own hands.*

She is a wise woman that feareth God, loveth her husband, setteth her hands to work, and with her eyes overseeth the ways of her family. Such a prudent wife buildeth up her house, that is to say, by her pains and provident care so heapeth up wealth, that she filleth her habitation with store of necessaries, and enlargeth the building of the very material house wherein she dwelleth. 'But a foolish woman pulleth it down with her own hands.' Such a wife, as is careless or wickedly given, by neglecting her calling, or lavishing out her husband's goods, overthroweth the estate of her family, and consumeth all that is in her house.

Ver. 2. *He that walketh uprightly feareth God : but he that is froward in his ways despiseth him.*

The outward life declareth whether a man feareth or despiseth God. 'He that walketh uprightly feareth God.' Not every one that maketh a show of holiness, but he that doeth the will of the Lord, feareth him aright. 'But he that is froward in his ways despiseth him.' He that leadeth a wicked life, in heart maketh no account of God, howsoever he may think or say that he honoureth him. Nathan the prophet told David plainly that he despised God, inasmuch as he committed adultery and murder.

Ver. 3. *In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride : but in the lips of the wise their own preservation.*

Whereas it is said, 'In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride,' the meaning hereof is, that the unwise are sometimes beaten, yea, stricken upon their mouths, for their proud and presumptuous speeches. 'But in the lips of the wise is their own preservation.' Such answers and defences are uttered by the lips of the prudent, whereby, as by certain bucklers, they keep themselves from dangers and troubles.

Ver. 4. *Where there are no oxen, the barn is empty : but store of fruit cometh by the strength of an ox.*

Among four-footed creatures the ox is of principal use in the calling of husbandry; which herein is commended; for the ox cutteth the ground, draweth the team, helpeth the plough, and treadeth out the corn. One of the heathen writers, considering the great

good that cometh by this beast, giveth him that would thrive in the world this counsel: first, get a house, then a wife, then an ox that lustily plougheth. The sense of this divine proverb is briefly this: Where there are no oxen, where the means of husbandry are neglected, the barn is clean, or empty; there is want of necessaries, as of wheat, rye, oats, and suchlike provision: but store of fruit cometh, abundance of food and necessaries ariseth, by the strength of an ox, by diligent ploughing with strong oxen, and by following after husbandry.

Ver. 5. *A faithful witness will not lie : but he that telleth lies will be a false witness.*

Herein we have two marks: the one, whereby we may know who will not easily lie; the other, whereby we may discern who will easily be a false witness. 'A faithful witness will not lie.' He that in the seat of judgment constantly testifieth the truth, will not usually, or in common speech, tell untruths. 'But he that telleth lies will be a false witness.' Whosoever is accustomed to lie, will not stick to forswear himself, or to bear false witness before a magistrate.

Ver. 6. *The scorner seeketh wisdom, and she will not be found : but knowledge is easy to him that is prudent.*

Not only he is a scorner who derideth all godliness, but he who making a profession of holiness, yet liveth wickedly. Such a one seeketh wisdom, that is, useth the means whereby he may attain to true understanding; for he readeth, prayeth, and frequenteth sermons; 'but she will not be found.' Wisdom estrangeth herself from the scorner, as a gentlewoman hideth herself from a suitor whom she fancieth not. The reason why scorners are always learning, and yet never able to come to the clear knowledge of the saving truth is, for that they retain an evil disposition, and seek not wisdom with a pure affection. 'But knowledge is easy to him that is prudent;' for he that is holy and lowly easily attaineth to the true knowledge of divine mysteries. As a loving spouse, when he cometh to the door whom she affecteth, will shew herself to him, and run to meet him; so the grace of God's Spirit offereth itself, and draweth near unto the humble and modest.

Ver. 7. *Depart from the presence of the foolish man*

and from him whom thou perceivest not to have the lips of knowledge.

Herein we are exhorted to avoid the company of the wicked. 'Depart from the presence of the foolish man.' Break off fellowship with the ungodly person; eat not nor drink with him, but seeing he walketh disorderly, and not according to his profession, separate thyself from him, that he may be ashamed. But as thou art to depart from him that is of an ill life, so thou art to shun him 'in whom thou perceivest not the words of knowledge;' for evil words corrupt good manners. We are not to receive false teachers to our house, nor to say God speed unto them.

Ver. 8. *The wisdom of the prudent man is to take heed unto his own way: the folly of fools to deceit.*

This sentence declareth in what thing especially both the wisdom of the wise and the folly of fools consisteth. 'The wisdom of the prudent man is to take heed to his own way.' Wisdom standeth not in knowledge of matters, but in framing a man's life to God's laws, and taking care that he be in a good course. As he is a wise traveller that looketh to his way, so he is a wise worshipper of God that ordereth his life aright. The chief folly of fools is to understand deceit; for to know how to deceive others, or to practise craft, is the very highway that leadeth to destruction, which befalleth those that give themselves to guile, and therefore they are stark fools that use it.

Ver. 9. *Fools make a jest of sin: but among the righteous is favour.*

No doubt but that by fools in this verse evil men are meant, who give themselves over to commit wickedness. These wicked ones jest at sin, that is, they not only laugh at it, as before hath been said that they do, chap. x. 23; neither only, as is afterward taught, chap. xv. 21, rejoice in heart when it is committed, but talk thereof pleasantly and merrily, as the Hebrew word doth signify. Such glee there is among the wicked. 'But among the righteous is favour;' that is to say, the practice of virtue, and uttering of gracious speeches, joined with such goodwill and sweet joy, as that their meeting is like the precious ointment that was poured on the head of Aaron. Oh what loving conference is among them! what holy prayers are poured out by them!

How do they with one heart and hand work that which is good! and how doth the Lord bless them and compass them with favour, as with a shield!

Ver. 10. *The heart knoweth the bitterness of the soul thereof; and a stranger shall not meddle with the joy thereof.*

Every word in this sentence carrieth with it his force, and hath need to be made plain. By the heart is meant that chief part of the body which is the fountain of life, and the seat of affections. By bitterness, extreme anguish, or whatsoever in the mind is bitter or unpleasant, as wormwood, is understood. That heart knoweth bitterness which, having experience of miseries, feelth sharp and piercing sorrow. The bitterness of the soul is inward heart-grief or vexation of mind, as when the very spirit of a man or woman is vexed, or the conscience tormented. A stranger is any man besides a man's own self. Meddling with joy, is being acquainted with the affection or matter of rejoicing. The closeness of some is noted in this parable, touching the concealing of their affections, or of the causes of their grief and comfort. Divers will bite in their sorrow, and contain the bitterness of their minds and desires within their hearts. Again, they will not communicate or tell to any the sweet comforts they feel, and the matter of their consolation, but will enjoy the same secretly within their own bosoms.

Ver. 11. *The house of the wicked shall be destroyed: but the tent of the righteous shall flourish.*

Not unfitly is a house here attributed to the wicked, and a tent or tabernacle to the just; for the ungodly oftentimes build strong and fair houses, and fill them with goods ill-gotten. Nevertheless, 'The house of the wicked shall be destroyed.' The dwelling-place of the ungodly, which for a time flourisheth, shall at the last be overthrown through God's judgment. 'But the tent of the righteous shall flourish.' The habitation of the just man and his household, be it never so poor or small at the beginning, shall prosper and increase in the end.

Ver. 12. *There is a way that seemeth right to a man: but the end thereof is the highway to death.*

A complaint is here taken up of the darkness and error of human judgment, which chooseth and

alloweth of that which is evil, and proveth hurtful in the end. There is no doubt but that by a way a course of life is meant, or some action whatsoever. The beginning of such a way seemeth right to a man, because he thinketh it good, or findeth therein some pleasure or gain. But the end of this course is the highway to death, or manifold ways to death; for the latter part of this course, meant here by the end thereof, leadeth to destruction, which is the reward of sin. Indeed the very entrance into an evil course of life is, as it were, the gate which bringeth to destruction; but proceeding or continuance in evil is that pathway which is near to destruction and damnation, near to sorrow and shame, to poverty and misery, which are the manifold ways of death. For example, entering into the company of thieves or robbers seemeth to some no such hurtful, but rather a gainful matter. But robbing and stealing in the end bringeth such as join themselves to thieves and robbers unto the gallows.

Ver. 13. *Even by laughing the heart is made heavy; and the end of rejoicing is mourning.*

This sentence accordeth with that threatening of our Saviour, 'Woe be to you that laugh, for you shall weep.' Moderate laughter or modest sports is not to be disallowed or condemned. But they are aid here to laugh, who, being tickled with the pleasures of sin, or drowned in the vanities of this life, spend their time in playing, and bathe themselves in carnal delights. By this enjoying of the pleasures of sin in the flesh 'the heart is made heavy;' the mind is stricken oftentimes with sadness; for either the conscience is troubled with feeling of sin, or shaken with fear and sense of God's judgments. Likewise again, 'The end of rejoicing is mourning;' for when the mind hath a long time been merry and cheerful, by reason of continued pleasures and daily delights, then some affliction befalling the flesh at the last, on a sudden there is great wailing and weeping. Wherefore, as bodily delight worketh heart-grief in the end, so ease of heart causeth pain of flesh at the last. Banquets are turned into vomitings; drinkings into palsies; lusts into gouts; pleasures into torments.

Ver. 14. *He that is of a froward heart shall be filled with his own ways; and a good man with his own (ways).*

The former part of this sentence is plain; for

whereas it is said, 'He that is of a froward heart shall be filled with his own ways;' the sense is evident, namely, that the ungodly person, סוֹן לֵב who hath in him a wicked heart of infidelity to depart from the living God, shall not taste, as it were, a little spoonful of God's wrath, but be made drunk with the great cup of his whole vengeance. The latter part is dark; but, to leave all scanning of words, the meaning of it seemeth to be, that as the wicked man is fully recompensed for his evil deeds, so the godly man shall also in mercy be thoroughly rewarded for his good deeds.

Ver. 15. *The simple man believeth all things: but he that is prudent taketh heed to his steps.*

As it is a fault to credit none, so it is no less a fault to believe all. He is worthily reprov'd as a simple man, that believeth all things. It is dangerous to be carried away with every tale which is told, even concerning the matters of this life; for through such foolish credulity a man may be brought to suspect the innocent, or to follow evil company. But this lightness of belief is most dangerous in matters of faith and doctrine; for when any is ready to believe every spirit, or to receive every doctrine, he becometh unstable, embracing error for truth, and following every new sect which ariseth. 'The prudent man taketh heed to his steps.' For being thoroughly rooted and grounded in knowledge and love of the truth, he frameth his life and judgment to the rule of God's word, and will not by any enticing speech be drawn from the right faith, or sincere obedience.

Ver. 16. *The wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool goeth on, and is bold.*

It were needless here to discourse of this matter, which afterward in this book is handled at large. Chap. xxi. 27. 'The wise man feareth' (he that is wary is stricken with some dread, when he is warned or threatened), and departeth from evil.' Moreover, he shunneth that which might hurt him, as the cunning fencer doth the stroke of a sword. 'But the fool goeth through;' the rash person rusheth into danger, and is bold, and is very secure.

Ver. 17. *He that is swift to wrath worketh folly: but he that is full of wiles is hated.*

Two contrary vices are herein compared together, hastiness and subtlety. 'He that is swift to wrath,'



that is, quickly moved to anger upon every occasion; such a rash fool worketh folly, that is to say, by speech or deed sheweth some signs of fondness and indiscretion. Such a furious madman is mocked. 'But he that is full of wiles is hated.' The dissembler who outwardly feigneth good-will, but inwardly bearing a grudge in his heart, intendeth revenge, and practiseth some mischief, is odious and detested by the Lord, and those that find out his hypocrisy.

Ver. 18. *The simple inherit folly: but the wise crown themselves with knowledge.*

Such as are of little wit, especially in spiritual matters, are said to be simple. The portion which these simple ones shall possess, as it were by inheritance, is folly, or ignorance and foolish behaviour, which worketh shame and contempt. 'But the wise crown themselves with knowledge.' For the prudent, who discern what is good and evil, neglect not their time, but study for understanding, and attain through industry unto learning, whereby it cometh to pass that they are in account and honour, and climb up unto preferment.

Ver. 19. *Evil men shall bow themselves before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the just.*

At one time or other, in one respect or other, the ungodly serve and crouch unto the godly. Sometimes they that fear the Lord are lifted up to honour, and then the evil men bow themselves before them. Sometimes again the righteous wax rich through God's blessing on their labours, and then come the wicked to their gates for alms and relief. Not only the poor ones, but the great ones, who yet are wicked ones, seek and sue now and then with all submission to the godly for their counsel or help. And I cannot tell how, but such a majesty there is in the godly sometimes, that most desperate wicked men reverence their faces, and are silent or courteous in their presence.

Ver. 20. *The poor man is hated even of his neighbour: but the rich man's friends are many.*

He that is in adversity is called a poor man. Such one is not only forsaken, but hated, not only by strangers, but by those that are near to him in welling and kin. 'But the rich man's friends are many.' Divers fawn on the wealthy, and pretend friendship to them, although in truth they are friends not to them, but to their goods.

Ver. 21. *He that despiseth his neighbour is a sinner: but he that sheweth mercy to the poor is blessed.*

The word sinner is taken here, as elsewhere in the Scripture, 1 Kings i. 21, for one who, being a great offender, hath his sin laid to his charge, and is condemned for it. He that despiseth or forsaketh his neighbour is a sinner in this sense, that is, a great offender, that shall be grievously plagued, and whose sins shall not be forgiven. 'But he that sheweth mercy to the poor is blessed.' He that is merciful to the needy and afflicted shall find mercy; his sins shall be forgiven, his necessities shall be relieved, and the blessings of God shall be multiplied on him.

Ver. 22. *Do not they err that devise mischief? but mercy and truth shall be to such as practise that which is good.*

By the borrowed speech of erring or going astray, which to do is a dangerous and uncomfortable thing, missing of a man's purpose, or meeting with some trouble, is meant. The Lord bringeth to nought the devices of the crafty, so that their hands are able to do nothing, Job v. 12. This is the estate of the workers of iniquity. 'But mercy and truth shall be to such as practise that which is good.' Mercy, for God will pardon their sins, and shew them favour in Christ. Truth, for God will perform his promises to those that do well, so that they shall not miss a sure and happy reward.

Ver. 23. *In every labour there is increase: but the talk of the lips only bringeth want.*

Not the talking of the tongue, but the working of the hand, maketh rich. 'In every labour,' as in husbandry, merchandise, and suchlike trades and sciences, 'there is increase;' some gain is to be gotten. 'But the talk of the lips only bringeth want.' By idle prattling nothing is gotten. Here is to be observed, that the word translated *labour*, doth signify earnest travail. Again, that by the talk of the lips, not all speaking, but vain and idle prattling, is meant. Otherwise, great is the fruit that is reaped by gracious and wise speeches.

Ver. 24. *The riches of the wise are their crown: the folly of fools remaineth folly.*

Wealth with wisdom greatly adorneth a man. 'The riches of the wise are their crown.' See an example in Job, chap. xix. 2. The wealth which the prudent person possesseth and useth aright maketh him in account

like a prince, whereas if he were poor he should be despised, for all his wisdom. 'The folly of fools remaineth folly.' For let rude and wicked men be never so wealthy, neither their wisdom nor account will be the greater, but they will live and die unwise and contemptible.

Ver. 25. *A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful one forgeth lies.*

He that uttereth a true testimony thereby oftentimes doth much good; for he delivereth not one, but many, from wrong and death. 'But a deceitful witness forgeth lies;' for he deviseth and uttereth untruths, whereby oftentimes it cometh to pass that not only the goods, but the lives, of many are taken away.

Ver. 26. *In the fear of the Lord there is strong hope, who is wont to be a refuge to his children.*

The fearing of man's face worketh fainting of the heart. The fear of the Lord doth not so, but rather raiseth a man up to strong hope, as here is shewed; for he that reverenceth the Lord with a son-like awe, neither feareth what man can do to him, nor doubteth of God's favour, but calleth him Abba, Father. Truly the Lord is a refuge to such reverent children, who do thus honour him as their father; for they may boldly come to him in trouble, and he will grant their requests, and preserve them from danger.

Ver. 27. *The fear of the Lord is a well-spring of life, to depart from the snares of death.*

The reverence of the Lord is a well-spring of life—that is, a fountain of many good things; for it ministereth wisdom, counsel, comfort, and many sweet blessings. It serveth also 'to depart from the snares of death;' for as it preserveth men in life, so it delivereth them from the death of the body and the soul.

Ver. 28. *In the multitude of people is the honour of a king: but by the want of people cometh the destruction of a prince.*

Nothing is more certain than that 'in the multitude of people is the honour of a king;' for that ruler which hath store of subjects under him may in time of war be defended by them, and by them is witnessed to be just and merciful, seeing otherwise so many would not live under his dominion. Again, it is as true, on the other side, that 'by the want (or decay) of people cometh the destruction of a prince;'

for that prince which wanteth people wanteth revenues and defence.

Ver. 29. *He that is slow to wrath aboundeth with understanding: but he that is of a hasty mind raiseth up folly.*

The patient man, who is not easily provoked, but forbeareth a long time, aboundeth with understanding, is exceeding wise, inasmuch as having stay of his affection, he still hath the use of his reason, and cutteth off quarrelling. 'But he that is of a hasty mind raiseth up folly;' as for him that is testy or furious, he playeth some foolish part or other.

Ver. 30. *A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy is the rottenness of the bones.*

By a sound heart is meant a quiet, or, as the word doth signify, a healing mind, not only void of troublesome passions, but full of peace and consolation, 1 John iii. 21. This sound and healing soul is the life of the flesh; for it quickeneth the tender parts of the body, strengtheneth the limbs, and cleareth the very skin. 'But envy is the rottenness of the bones.' Fretting at a man's own trouble, or another's prosperity, tormenteth the poor carcase without and within; for it is a very worm, as the Hebrew word doth signify, and that of the bones, the stronger parts of the body. It is the moth of the soul—the senses it eateth, the breast it burneth, the mind it grieveth, the heart of a man, like a certain plague, it feedeth upon, and with a pestilent burning devoureth all the good things which he possesseth. The causes of a sound heart are integrity of life and holy piety. It is a good thing to have health both of body and soul, which John witnesseth to Gaius in his epistle to him, saying, 'Beloved, I wish that thou mayest have prosperity and health, even as thy soul prospereth.'

Ver. 31. *He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth him that made him: but he that sheweth mercy to the needy honoureth him.*

He is said to oppress the poor that dealeth hardly with those that are in necessity, or by his might beateth down the right of him that is in affliction. Such a one reproacheth him that made him; for in the creature he despiseth and disgraceth the Creator, who made the poor man as well as the rich. 'But he that sheweth mercy to the needy honoureth him.' He that doth good to those that want or are

in misery, by helping the servants, doth shew that he esteemeth and loveth their heavenly Lord and Master.

Ver. 32. *The wicked man is pursued in his trouble : but he that is righteous is protected in his death.*

He that hath sold himself as a slave to work iniquity is called here a wicked man. Such a one is pursued in his trouble ; that is to say, driven on forward into misery when once his affliction beginneth ; for either his heart tormenteth him, or he layeth violent hands upon himself, or the angel of the Lord driveth him forward from one calamity into another. Against such wicked men the prophet prayeth in the psalm after this manner, 'Let their way be dark and slippery, and let the angel of the Lord pursue them,' Ps. xxxv. 6. On the contrary side, 'He that is righteous is protected in his death ;' that is to say, the just man is assisted or delivered from misery and destruction in his greatest adversity or extremity, yea, in the very danger and torment of death itself.

Ver. 33. *Wisdom resteth in the heart of the prudent : and in the midst of fools she maketh herself known.*

Understanding and truth is said to rest in the heart of the prudent ; for that the grace of God's Spirit entering into the holy soul, not only worketh comfort therein, but dwelleth and continueth in the same for ever, as a place fit to entertain so honourable a guest. As wisdom remaineth thus in the hearts of the godly, so in the midst of fools—that is, of wicked men—she maketh herself known ; for that knowledge of God which may leave them without excuse is made manifest unto them. Indeed wisdom dwelleth not within unclean souls, but yet she shineth even into the hearts and spirits of the wicked, and the light of their consciences doth in many things shew them the truth and convince them.

Ver. 34. *Righteousness exalteth a people : but sin is a reproach to nations.*

The righteousness here spoken of comprehendeth true religion, and the enacting, executing, and practising of wholesome laws. This 'righteousness exalteth a people,' that is, causeth the inhabitants of a well-ordered commonwealth to prosper and to be commended ; for God poureth many blessings on

those that practise mercy, judgment, and suchlike virtues. 'But sin is a reproach (or, as some read the Hebrew word here used, a decay or ruin) to nations.' Countries or kingdoms are infamous for their special vices, and public offences draw down public judgments on those places and lands wherein they are committed.

Ver. 35. *The favour of the king is toward a wise servant : but his wrath toward him that causeth shame.*

Wisdom is necessary for all estates of people, and namely for servants, as here is shewed unto us, and especially those servants that attend upon princes. Every ruler is a king in some sort within his jurisdiction and house ; but properly he is said to be a king, who as supreme head ruleth a whole kingdom. The favour of such a king is a great good thing, for it is as the dew upon the herbs. It is a friendly affection, the effects whereof are riches, honour, preferment, and many good things. But who is a wise servant ? He that is trusty, discreet, obedient, ready to please, and that despatcheth his affairs in due season. Toward such an officer, such a subject, such a servant, will be the favour of a king, of a ruler, of a master. 'But his wrath will be toward him that causeth shame.' The servant that by doing his business untowardly or fondly, offendeth his governor, or maketh him blush, or to receive some discredit, shall feel his master's most heavy displeasure, the effects whereof are frowning, chiding, displacing, correction, and destruction.

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## CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1. *A soft answer turneth away wrath : but a bitter word stirreth up anger.*

A speech wherein fair words are used, or titles of reverence given, causeth displeasure to cease. 'But a bitter word stirreth up anger.' Sharp and reproachful terms move choler. The reason hereof is manifest ; for by the speaking of a hard word the cause of anger is increased. Again, by uttering of a gentle speech, the matter of wrath is diminished.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See an example, on the one side, in Gideon, Judges viii. 2, &c. On the other, in Nabal, who by his currish answer roused David to great anger.

Ver. 2. *The tongue of the wise setteth forth knowledge : but the mouth of fools poureth out folly.*

The prudent person speaketh in such sort as that his speeches carry a grace and force with them, which he placeth and ordereth rightly and wisely. The indiscreet man on the other side hath no regard either to the matter or manner of his speech ; Col. iv. 6, 'Let then your speech be gracious always, and powdered with salt, that you may know how to answer every man.'

Ver. 3. *The eyes of the Lord are in all places, beholding the wicked and the good.*

Here is observed that the all-seeing Spirit of the Lord vieweth and pondereth all the corners of the world, and all sorts of persons. This is all one with that which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews meaneth when he saith, that all things are naked and manifest before him with whom we have to do, Heb. iv. For as concerning the quarters of the world, 'Lord, whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I fly from thy presence? If I climb up to heaven thou art there ; if I lay my bed in the grave, behold thou art there also,' Ps. cxxxix. Now, as touching the persons of all sorts, the Lord is in the temple of his holiness, the Lord's throne is in heaven, whose eyes behold, and whose eyelids try the sons of men, Ps. xi. The Lord trieth the just man, but his soul hateth the wicked man, and him who loveth violence.

Ver. 4. *The healing of the tongue is as a tree of life : the mischievousness of it is as a breach made by the wind.*

As a tree which bringeth forth pleasant and wholesome fruits is a precious and profitable thing, so the tongue which converteth and comforteth the hearts of men is a rare jewel, Job viii. 1 ; James iii. On the contrary side, as a blustering wind, which throweth down trees and houses, doth much harm, so a venomous tongue, which causeth troubles and great calamities, is one of the greatest evils in the world.

Ver. 5. *A fool despiseth his father's instruction : but he which regardeth a rebuke is very wise.*

He who is an enemy unto his own welfare, will not be ruled by good counsel ; but he who is content to be reproved, tendereth his own happy estate. See chap. x. 1.

Ver. 6. *In the house of the righteous man there is*

*great treasure (or strength) : but the wicked man's revenue wasteth of itself.*

The meaning of this sentence is manifest—namely, that the goods of the just remain and continue firm unto them and theirs, and that sinners' substance consumeth, none in a manner can tell how. The root of this sentence is to be found in the book of Deuteronomy, where the Lord, first, maketh this promise to those who fear him, that he will bless their baskets and their barns ; and secondly, threateneth the transgressors of his laws, that he will curse them in their baskets and their kneading troughs, yea, in the fruit of their belly and of their ground, Deut. xxviii. 17.

Ver. 7. *The lips of the wise scatter knowledge : but the heart of the fools that which is not good.*

The godly, wheresoever they come, speak to the edification of their brethren. In their houses they catechise their children ; in the company of their neighbours they entreat of God's word and works ; finally, in the church, if they be teachers, they publish wholesome doctrine. On the contrary side, the wicked, out of the ill treasure of their hearts, bringeth forth evil things, spread abroad errors and vanities.

Ver. 8. *The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination unto the Lord : but the prayer of the righteous is acceptable unto him.*

The judgment which the Lord carrieth, as well concerning the wicked as the just, herein is revealed unto us. 'The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination unto the Lord.' Not only all the labour, but all the cost which the unfaithful or wicked liars bestow on the worship of God is in vain ;<sup>1</sup> yea, it is nothing else but a sin, and provocation of the wrath of God. The reason hereof is, for that God respecteth not men's actions, but their persons. Sacrifices were at this time not evil in themselves, but as they proceed from the wicked, they were evil ; for it is an abominable thing to God that the wicked man should take unto him before his sight the person of a just man. On the contrary side, 'The prayer of the righteous is acceptable unto him.' Even the least service of the believer who walketh in the Spirit is precious and acceptable to the Lord, because he accepteth him in Christ.

<sup>1</sup> See an example in Cain and Abel.

Ver. 9. *The way of the wicked man is abomination to the Lord : but he loveth him who followeth after righteousness.*

That wicked course of life which the ungodly lead is called here the way of the wicked. This is said to be an abomination to the Lord, because the just God abhorreth unrighteousness as a most foul and filthy thing. From hence it cometh that so many plagues fall down from heaven upon the sinner, and that, as the psalmist speaketh, 'the way of the wicked doth perish,' Ps. i. Now he is said to follow after righteousness who is not cold or slow in doing that which is good, but with might and main pursueth after whatsoever is upright and just. True it is, we can never attain unto perfect righteousness while we live in this world ; but with our whole endeavour we must follow after it, making it as it were our gain. Him who thus followeth after righteousness, the Lord loveth. The meaning of this speech is, that God in Christ not only favoureth or accepteth the just person, but that he useth to bestow many benefits on him, as signs and tokens of his fatherly good-will. Hence it is that they that walk uprightly have oftentimes such wealth, estimation, honour, and prosperity in this world. Hence it is that always they who fear the Lord are indued with the graces of God's Spirit, and abound with joy of the Holy Ghost. Finally, hence it is that the true worshippers of God are preserved from so many dangers of body and soul, and that oftentimes miraculously. For indeed the love of God is to be considered, not only in the affection, but in the effects of his good-will. This sentence is therefore diligently to be observed, because divers think they are in the love of God, and shall find favour through Jesus Christ ; howsoever they commit all sorts of wickedness even with greediness, or proceed in their evil course of life until the last gasp. But either such do greatly deceive themselves, or the Spirit here setteth down an untruth, which once to imagine were most horrible and impious.

Ver. 10. *Instruction seemeth evil (or an evil chastisement shall be) unto him who forsaketh the way : he who hateth correction (or reproof) shall die.*

The ungodly are in this sentence threatened with destruction. 'Instruction seemeth evil unto him who forsaketh the way.' The doctrine whereby the

sinner is warned and instructed displeaseth him, as being in his eyes too sharp and bitter ; for which cause he shall meet with some grievous adversity and scourge, inflicted by God or man. 'He who hateth correction shall die.' As for him who not only forsaketh the way of virtue, but hateth reproofs, or any chastisements whatsoever, he shall either before the time lose this temporal life, or after this life die eternally.

Ver. 11. *Hell and destruction are before the Lord : how much more the hearts of the sons of men ?*

There is nothing hidden from the all-seeing Spirit of the Lord, be it never so secret. 'Hell and destruction are before the Lord.' God not only seeth the outward things which are on the face of the earth, or of the waters, but he knoweth also the state of the dead and damned, who have their being in the grave, or the infernal pit. The condition of the deceased is of all other things most hidden from the eyes of man, seeing the dead never return, and are in most secret and deep places. For this cause Job attributeth this praise unto God, Job xxvi. 6, as being peculiar to him alone, that 'Hell is naked before him, and destruction uncovered in his sight.' But now, if God knoweth that which is most deep, much more doth he know that which, though it is deep, yet is not so deep—the heart of man I mean. Wherefore the Spirit of God reasoneth thus : 'How much more the hearts of the sons of men ?' Hence it is that Jeremiah speaketh after this sort : 'The heart of man is evil and unsearchable, who shall know it ? I the Lord, who search the heart and try the reins.' For he which knoweth those things which have unto men no being, much more doth know those things, which although they are secret, yet they are.

Ver. 12. *A scorner loveth not him who rebuketh him : neither will he go unto the wise.*

He is a scorner who either in words scoffeth at religion, or so carrieth himself as that by his lewd and offensive conversation he witnesseth that he maketh but a jest or mock thereof. Such a wicked man esteemeth not, but hateth, not only the doctrine, but the person of him who telleth him of his faults. Moreover, he abstaineth both from the company, the house, and the school of learned men. Hence it is that profane people are so good fellows with those

who are like themselves, but such strangers with their godly neighbours and their faithful teachers.

Ver. 13. *A joyfull heart maketh a good (or glad) countenance : but by the sorrow of the heart the spirit (or breath) is broken.*

The Spirit of God herein speaketh to the heavy-hearted person as tender mothers are wont to do to their children who cry, when they tell them that if they whine thus they will mar their faces. 'A joyfull heart maketh a good countenance.' A merry and quiet mind maketh not only the whole body healthful, but the face, which is the glory thereof, and wherein the senses are specially seated, comely. For the affections of the mind pierce into the whole body, but especially work in the countenance. Hence it is that, when the heart is cheerful, the eye is quick, the cheeks are ruddy, the blood is clear, the skin is fair. On the contrary side, 'By the sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.' Heart-grief not only marreth the look, but dullereth the spirits in such sort as that the sorrowful wight neither hath the perfect use of his wits, neither can with ease draw his breath.

Ver. 14. *The heart of the prudent man seeketh knowledge : but the mouth of fools is fed with foolishness.*

Herein is declared that every man seeketh after that wherewith he is delighted. 'The heart of the prudent man seeketh knowledge.' The soul of a man indued with understanding seeketh for learning as the proper food thereof, to the end that thereby it may increase in wisdom. 'But the mouth of fools is fed with foolishness.' Not only the inward soul of the fool is delighted with vanity, but the outward parts of the body rejoice therein; so that, with open and gaping mouth, as it were, he swilleth in and feedeth on vain speeches and foolish toys.

Ver. 15. *All the days of the afflicted person are evil : but a good heart is a continual feast.<sup>1</sup>*

Great difference there is between a woeful wight and a merry-hearted man. 'All the days of the afflicted person are evil.' He who, being under some great adversity, is vexed in mind, as one not well contented with his estate, can neither sleep, eat, work, nor joy in anything at any time; but both night and day seemeth long and grievous unto him, because the grief which pained him causeth him to

<sup>1</sup> Or a merry heart. Or his days who hath a merry heart are a continual feast. But the sense is all one.

mislike whatsoever is present. How true this is it may appear in Job, who, being pressed down with manifold and sore afflictions, complaineth and crieth out, under the burden of the same, that he had as an inheritance the months of vanity, and that painful nights had been appointed unto him. 'When (saith he) I laid me down, I said, When shall I arise? and measuring the evening, I am full with tossing to and fro unto the dawning of the day,' Job vii. 4. 'But a good heart is a continual feast.' On the contrary side, he who, being in prosperity, carrieth in him a cheerful mind; or being in adversity, is of good courage; or being in any condition of life, is content with his estate, and quiet in his conscience, passeth away his life and days so pleasantly, as they do the time who, being at a wedding feast, there taste of dainty delicates, see most delightsome spectacles, and hear most sweet instruments of music. For indeed a merry heart continually refresheth a man with security, and comforteth him in all adversity. But this is diligently to be observed, that none can have a cheerful mind indeed, but only such as, through faith in Christ, having peace with God pollute not their consciences with detestable iniquities. For indeed evils enter in into such to trouble their minds, to profane their joys, and to pull them from the continual feast of security here spoken of, who either walk in the committing of gross offences, or are close hypocrites and dissemblers.

Ver. 16. *Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than a great treasure and trouble therewith.*

'Better is a little,' a small portion of goods is more profitable and comfortable, Ps. xxxvii. 16, 'with the fear of the Lord,' with godliness causing a contented mind, yea, and working joy in the Holy Ghost, 'than great treasure,' than the abundance of wealth, 'and trouble therewith,' with fear, care, sorrow, or the check of an ill conscience. For what good can the greatest store of treasures or pleasures do a man when he hath not a heart to enjoy them?

Ver. 17. *Better is a dinner of green herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.*

'Better is a dinner of green herbs where love is,' slender fare where concord and hearty good-will is, is indeed better cheer 'than a stalled ox and hatred therewith,' than dainty dishes with ill-will or brawling; for indeed love recompenseth the slen-

derness of the fare, but hatred and brawling causeth most delicate meats to seem unsavoury.

Ver. 18. *An angry man stirreth up contention: but he that is slow to wrath appeaseth strife.*

The angry man, the furious person, whose very presence is hurtful, 'stirreth up contention,' maketh debate where none was before. 'But he that is slow to wrath,' as for him who can suffer much, 'appeaseth strife,' he causeth contention already raised to cease; so profitable is the very presence of the patient man.

Ver. 19. *The way of a slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the path of the righteous is (as) a paved causeway.*

'The way of a slothful man,' the course which the sluggard taketh in going about his affairs, 'is as an hedge of thorns,' is slow and hard; for he goeth creepingly about his business, yea, his fears and griefs prick him and stay him like thorns or briers. 'But the path of the righteous is as a paved causeway.' The order which the godly man taketh is most plain and easy, who so readily and lustily runneth on in the works of his calling as if he walked on a paved causeway.

Ver. 20. *A wise son rejoiceth his father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.*

A godly child at all times by his obedience comforteth his father, 'but a foolish man despiseth his mother.' An ungodly youth, when he cometh to man's age, maketh no account of his parents, but especially contemneth or disobeyeth her who bare him, being a great heaviness unto her by this means. This sentence then teacheth that we owe obedience to parents, both whilst we are young and whilst we are old.

Ver. 21. *Foolishness is a joy to him who is destitute of understanding: but a man of understanding will walk uprightly.*

'Foolishness is a joy to him who is destitute of understanding.' A vain man is delighted in seeing, hearing, and doing of vain things. 'But a man of understanding will walk uprightly.' The joy of a prudent person is to make his paths straight, or to do the will of God.

Ver. 22. *Without counsel thoughts come to nought: but by store of counsellors they shall be established.*

Intents not advised on vanish, or have unlucky

issue; but those enterprises which are considered on, or debated by learned counsel, are afterward executed with very good success.

Ver. 23. *Joy cometh to a man by the answer (or speech) of his mouth: and how good is a word in his season!*

This sentence containeth a commendation of wise speeches. 'Joy cometh to a man by the answer of his mouth.' A gracious speech bringeth gladness to him who uttered it; for he rejoiceth either for the honour which is given him for his words, or for the profit which he seeth others thereby receive. 'And how good is a word in his season.' How profitable and delightsome is counsel or instruction, given in time of necessity, and when it falleth out well.

Ver. 24. *The way to life above (is walked in) by the wise man, to the end that he may depart from hell below.*

There is a double way, the one strait, which leadeth to life, and this only the wise do find; the other broad, which leadeth to destruction, and this the ungodly walk in, but the prudent avoid it, Mat. vii. 13, 14; Col. iii. 2; Phil. iii. 20. Wherefore the meditation of the faithful is on holy things, yea, their conversation is heavenly, to this end, that not being entangled with sin of the world, they may be preserved from destruction and damnation. Thus then doth the path of virtue bring the godly at last to life above, whom not only it raiseth up to heavenly thoughts and actions, but lifteth up in the end to celestial glory.

Ver. 25. *The Lord will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.*

This sentence commendeth the justice of God, unto the terrifying of mighty oppressors, and unto the comforting of the poor people, who are insinuated in the name of the widow, whose estate is of all others most grievous, because she being desolated of her husband lieth open to all wrongs, but especially to the injuries of great and wealthy men. See the root hereof, Exod. xxii. 22. 'The Lord then will destroy the house of the proud.' God often overthroweth their families, yea, pulleth them up by the roots, who in the pride of their hearts have oppressed the poor, taking from them either their lands or goods. 'But he will establish the border of the widow.' The Lord will restore the poor to their right, or else, by some means or other,

he will so defend their possessions and fields against the power of the mighty, that they shall not be able to pull them out of their hands.

Ver. 26. *The thoughts of the wicked man are abomination to the Lord : but the words of the pure are pleasant words.*

All things which proceed from the wicked, as, for example, even their thoughts, are unclean and abominable in the sight of God, Tit. i. 15. On the contrary side, not only their thoughts, but the words of the godly, which flow from the good treasure of their hearts, are acceptable to the Lord, and as a clean and sweet sacrifice before him.

Ver. 27. *He which is given to gain troubleth his own house ; but he which hateth gifts shall live.*

Covetousness is herein threatened. 'He which is given to gain troubleth his own house.' Such a one as getteth goods by hook or crook, or is addicted to evil gain, is a cause and occasion of many evils in his estate and family, Hab. ii. 9. 'But he which hateth gifts shall live.' On the contrary side, such a one as abhorreth bribes given to pervert justice, or to any such ill intent, shall live in prosperity and peace.

Ver. 28. *The heart of the righteous studieth to speak : but the mouth of the wicked babbleth (or poureth) out evil things.*

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things ; but an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things. See the root hereof, Ps. xxxvii. 30, 31. 'The heart of the just man studieth to speak.' The upright person premeditateth what to say, and when and how to utter his words : 'but the mouth of the wicked poureth forth evil things.' The mouth of the ungodly can neither be silent nor speak well, but prattleth and babbleth vainly, rashly, offensively and lewdly.

Ver. 29. *The Lord is (far off) from the wicked : but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.*

God is far off from the ungodly, not in place, but in help. See the root hereof, or a like sentence, Ps. cxli. 13. On the contrary side, God is near to those who fear him, not in presence only, but in favour, granting their prayers, and succouring them in their adversities.

Ver. 30. *The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart : and a good hearing maketh the bones fat.*

Those things which are received in by the eye or ear, have great force to affect a man. 'The light of the eye rejoiceth the heart.' A sight pleasant and acceptable to the eye reviveth the spirits. 'And a good hearing maketh the bones fat.' A good report but especially the doctrine of the gospel, which is the voice of joy and gladness, not only comforteth the mind, but causeth the body to be in good plight.

Ver. 31. *The ear that hearkeneth to the correction (or reproof) of life shall lodge among the wise.*

'The ear that hearkeneth,' the person which heareth and yieldeth obedience, 'to the correction of life,' to wholesome reproofs which teach men to live well here, and lead them to life eternal, 'shall lodge among the wise ;' shall not only in this world have a place, yea, honour also among the learned, but hereafter reign with them in God's kingdom.

Ver. 33. *He that refuseth instruction (or withdraweth himself from instruction) despiseth his own soul : but he that obeyeth correction possesseth his own heart.*

'He that refuseth instruction,' the contemner of good counsel, who neither is wise himself, nor will be taught by other, 'despiseth his own soul,' by want of knowledge and grace layeth open his life to destruction ; 'but he that obeyeth correction possesseth his own heart.' On the contrary side, he who doth profit by rebukes preserveth his soul from death and from God's wrath.

Ver. 33. *The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom ; and before honour (goeth) humility.*

'The fear of the Lord,' the reverence of God, 'is the instruction of wisdom,' is that which maketh a man wise, or which, as a schoolmistress, teacheth wisdom ; for the fear of God giveth a man many good lessons. 'And before honour goeth humility ;' and lowliness of mind bringeth a man to glory.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1. *The preparations of the heart are in man but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.*

Herein is taught, that when a man hath obtained a former grace of thinking well, he standeth in need of a second grace—namely, to speak well, without which he shall never be able aright to utter any part of that matter, or of those words, which he hat!



meditated on or conned by heart. 'The preparations of the heart are in man.' There are oftentimes in a man's mind whole armies of thoughts, placed therein in exact order, as it were in battle array, so that he setteth down with himself both what and how to speak. 'But the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.' Nevertheless, utterance is the gift of God, and a man shall so speak as God guideth his mouth, not as he purposeth himself. Mark here, that it is not said the preparations of the heart are of man, but that they are in man. For of ourselves we are not able to think a good thought, much less then to have such armies of good thoughts as may in themselves please the Lord.

Ver. 2. *All the ways of man are pure in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the spirits.*

We all oftentimes please ourselves when we displease the Lord. 'All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes.' All the courses, proceedings, and actions of a man, so like him oftentimes as that therein he justifieth himself, and his conscience doth not charge or accuse him with anything done amiss. 'But the Lord pondereth the spirits.' Nevertheless God, who seeth more than men do, and searcheth the very inward affection and disposition of the mind, considereth the hearts themselves, and weighing them, as goldsmiths do their plate and coins, findeth them light, and counterfeit oftentimes.

Ver. 3. *Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be directed.*

When we would admonish any to commend his affairs to the Lord, we may rehearse and commend this saying unto him, 'Commit thy works unto the Lord,' Ps. xxxvii. 5, and lv. 23. Whereas thy troubles and the labours of thy calling are, as it were, certain weighty burdens, which lie heavily on thy back, torment not thyself with care, but roll them, as it were, upon almighty God, 'and thy thoughts shall be directed,' and so thy desires shall at last happily be accomplished. We are then, according to the exhortation of the apostle, to be careful for nothing, Phil. iv. 6, but in every matter to make known our suits unto God by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

Ver. 4. *The Lord hath made all men for himself; yea, even the wicked man unto the day of evil.*

Predestination is herein touched, and the causes

thereof are briefly set down. 'The Lord,' the eternal God, from whom and by whom all things are, 'hath made,' hath not only created, but ordained, 'all men,' all sorts of people, 'for himself,' for the setting forth of his justice, power, wisdom, and glory. 'Yea, even the wicked man,' he hath also ordained the very reprobate person, 'unto the day of evil,' to the time of judgment and affliction, that so in this vessel of wrath the justice of God may be declared, and the glory thereof appear in his destruction. The cause of the damnation of the wicked is in themselves, who are evil of themselves, and are not made evil of the Lord, nor by him compelled unto evil. But the fountain, not only of election but reprobation, is, as here is shewed, the will of God, which is a rule of justice. God is without fault in refusing the wicked, since he is indebted unto none; but the wicked are most justly condemned, seeing by their suits they are indebted unto God.

Ver. 5. *Every one that is proud in heart is abomination to the Lord; though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.*

There are divers sorts of pride, and of proud persons. Some are proud in apparel, some proud in speech, some proud in work, some proud in heart. These, albeit they neither have lofty looks, nor utter proud words, nor deal in matters too high for them, yet, seeing they have haughty minds, they are so far off from being highly accounted of by the Lord, that they are abomination to him. Neither only are they high-minded, who are puffed up within themselves in regard of outward or inward gifts, abhorred by the Lord, but they are also sure to be plagued by him. For 'though hand join in hand,' that is, though the proud person labour with both hands to escape, yet 'he shall not be unpunished.'

Ver. 6. *By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord evil is departed from.*

When a man hath sinned against God, it is a very profitable and necessary point of instruction for him to know how or by what means his iniquities may be so covered or cleansed, as that they shall not be imputed unto him.<sup>1</sup> This point is here taught in the former part of this sentence, when it is said that 'by mercy and truth iniquity is purged.' Outward sacrifices, or the blood of beasts, were not able of

<sup>1</sup> See mercy and truth in the same sense, chap. xiv. 22.

themselves to take away sins. But the mercy and truth of God, that is, the Lord's free grace in Christ, and the performance of the promises of the word in him, washeth away and cleanseth all iniquities. The mercy and truth of God, I say, for that the mercy and truth of man cannot do it; neither is it anywhere in the Scripture said, that by the mercy and truth of man iniquity is purged; whereas therein often it is affirmed that our sins are washed and cleansed by the favour and truth of God. As God's mercy and truth thus pardoneth sin, so the fear of the Lord, as is shewed in the latter part of this sentence, preserveth from sinning. For by the son-like awe of the Lord, sin is so shunned as that it is not committed, or at least that an evil way, whereby God may be offended, is forsaken and laid aside.

Ver. 7. *When the Lord favoureth the ways of a man, he maketh his enemies at peace with him.*

It is a miserable thing to be hated or pursued by troublesome adversaries. He that is vexed by deadly foes would give anything that he possesseth for peace. This change from hatred into love, and from trouble to rest, must proceed from the Lord above; for he alone can turn lions into lambs, and alter men's hearts. Hence it is that it is said, 'When the Lord favoureth the ways of a man, he maketh his enemies at peace with him.' That is to say, at what time God is reconciled to any person, or beareth toward him a friendly affection, there he causeth his adversaries not only to lay aside their hatred, but to bear good-will, and to enter into a league of friendship with him.

Ver. 8. *Better is a little with righteousness, than great comings in without equity.*

We are to be well contented with that portion which we attain by lawful means, be it never so small. 'A little with righteousness,' a small stock well gotten, 'is better than great comings in without equity,' is to be preferred before abundance of goods heaped together by injury and oppression. For goods ill-gotten prosper not, but those that are lawfully come by continue. The wicked in their abundance are unquiet, without God's favour, and not under his blessing, but his curse. The righteous man, on the contrary side, in his poor or mean estate, liveth quietly and joyfully with his wife and children,

beholdeth God's mercy in that little which he possesseth, and is blessed of the Lord.

Ver. 9. *The heart of man purposeth his way: but the Lord ordereth his steps.*

When we have obtained God's preventing grace, so that we purpose a matter, or intend to do that which is good, we have need of a new assisting or finishing grace to be able to perform the same; for the issues or success of matters are not in our hand, but in God's grace or power, who worketh in us both to will and to perform according to his good-will and pleasure. Wherefore not without cause it is here said, that 'the heart of man purposeth his way, but the Lord ordereth his steps.' The sum and sense of which speech is, that many journeys are often intended, and many courses devised, by mortal men, which so fall out as the Lord disposeth of them; for man purposeth, but God disposeth.

Ver. 10. *A divine sentence shall be in the mouth of the king: his lips shall not transgress in judgment.*

By the name of *kings*, who were wont themselves to sit to hear and determine causes, all magistrates who bear the sword are meant. These rulers are first here exhorted to have a divine sentence in their mouth; that is, to pronounce the truth, and to utter the very oracle of God. To this end the kings of Israel were by the Lord in the law commanded to read the word of God, Deut. xvii. 18. Now, secondly, the king's lips ought not to transgress in judgment; that is to say, in the court, or on the tribunal-seat, pronounce a wrong or false sentence. This also was forbidden by the Lord in the old law where he saith to the judge, 'Thou shalt be far of from a false speech, and not slay the innocent and the just,' Exod. xxiii. 7.

Ver. 11. *The scale and the balances of justice belong to the Lord: all the weights of the bag are his work.*

To shew that all measures and weights must be just, and that God hath ordained such things, mention is made here both of the scale or beam, and of the balances, and of the weights. But seeing that point hath been handled before, it is not again to be stood upon. See chap. xi. 1.

Ver. 12. *It should be an abomination unto kings commit wickedness: for the throne is established justice.*

Herein is declared what should displease rule

'It should be an abomination to kings to commit wickedness.' Above all other persons, princes should most of all abhor iniquity, which they are to punish in whomsoever they find it. Great cause there is why they should so do. 'For the throne is established by justice.' The royal crown is maintained, not so much by weapons or fortresses, as by maintaining right and punishing sin, which course what rulers soever take, people will love them, and God will bless them.

Ver. 13. *Religious lips should be the delight of kings: and he that speaketh upright words is to be loved by them.*

We have heard what ought to displease princes, consider now what ought to please them. 'Righteous lips should be the delight of kings.' Wise and faithful speech, void of dissimulation, and far from flattery, ought to please rulers. 'And he that speaketh upright words is to be loved by them.' Not only good speeches, but those persons that utter them, ought to be acceptable to princes; for such are good helpers to the well-governing of the commonwealth and counselling of the people, and therefore deserve to be made much of.

Ver. 14. *The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.*

To displease princes is a dangerous matter; for 'The wrath of a king is as messengers of death.' The anger or rage of a ruler is of so great force, as that it is a sign of vengeance near, or of present death, being herein like unto messengers who are sent to slay a man. Wrath is a thunderbolt where it is joined with power; there all must needs perish, where power permitteth to do as much as anger persuadeth. The very threatening and checks of princes are terrible. Yet a wise man will pacify the wrath of a king; for either by some calm and prudent speech, or by some politic device, he will assuage his fury.

Ver. 15. *In the light of the king's countenance is life: and his favour is as a thick cloud of the latter rain.*

As in a prince's wrath is much terror, so in his favour is much comfort. The good-will of a prince is very fitly herein resembled to the light of the sun, and to the rain that falleth in due season; for the shining of the sun causeth the earth to fructify,

and reviveth all living creatures; in like manner also the gracious countenance of the prince rejoiceth the hearts of his subjects, and quickeneth their very spirits. Again, the latter rain falling before harvest, refresheth the ground and ripeneth the corn; so likewise the favour of the king comforteth and benefiteth the subject not a little.

Ver. 16. *How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get prudence more to be desired than silver!*

Wisdom excelleth wealth by many degrees, and in divers respects. First, Many things are done by policies which cannot be done by riches. Secondly, Earthly treasures are corruptible, but the graces of God are immortal. Last of all, Worldly goods make this life the more happy, but the gifts of God's Spirit, which are parcels of the wisdom here spoken of, enrich the soul, and further a man to eternal life.

Ver. 17. *The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way keepeth his life.*

This sentence teacheth that it is a safe thing for a man to walk in the laws of God. 'The highway (or causeway) of the upright is to depart from evil.' The safe course or defence of the righteous is to fly sin; for he that observeth the law of God both avoideth that which may displease him and his judgments. 'He that keepeth his way keepeth his life.' Whosoever ordereth his life aright, not straying into the paths of error or sin, saveth his own soul from destruction.

Ver. 18. *Pride goeth before destruction: and an high mind before a fall.*

The proper reward of pride is destruction, for pride will have a fall. 'Pride goeth before destruction.' Stately behaviour, shewing itself in presumptuous words or vainglorious deeds, is the forerunner which goeth immediately before some plague or misery; for when pride of life most exceedeth, then God's judgment is even at hand. 'And a haughty mind before a fall.' A secure, stout, contemptuous, or rebellious heart is the immediate forerunner of disgracing or displacing.

Ver. 19. *Better it is to be of an humble mind with the lowly, than to divide the spoils with the proud.*

It is a pleasant thing to be enriched with other men's goods; it is a gainful thing to have part of

the prey; it is a glorious thing to divide the spoil. But what are all outward possessions to the inward virtues of the mind? what will goods ill gotten profit the possessors thereof? finally, what is the end of the proud person, but to have a fall? 'Better it is then to be of an humble mind with the lowly, than to divide the spoils with the proud.' Surely it is better to be injured than to do injury; it is better to be patient than to be insolent; it is better with the afflicted people of God to be bruised in heart and low of port, than to enjoy the pleasures or treasures of sin or of this world for a season.

Ver. 20. *He that hearkeneth to the word findeth good: and blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord.*

Two things make a man happy, as herein is shewed; the one, hearing of the word, the other, faith in God. 'He that hearkeneth to the word obtaineth, or findeth, good.' Whosoever listeneth to the doctrine of the Scripture, shall thereby receive great comfort and instruction. 'And blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord.' Whereas the word profiteth nothing without faith; most happy is he that putteth his confidence in the power and mercy of God, and believeth the doctrine of the Scripture. 'Blessed,' saith the prophet 'is the man whose helper is in the Lord God, that made heaven and earth,' Ps. cxlvi.

Ver. 21. *He that is wise in heart is to be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips giveth instruction.*

Wisdom and eloquence are herein compared together. He is said to be wise in heart, who hath filled his breast with the knowledge of many profitable matters. Such a one shall be called and is indeed a prudent man; for by the quickness of his wit, and by diligent reading, he attaineth to great learning, and is counted and called a profound clerk. 'And the sweetness of the lips giveth instruction.' Eloquence, or a gracious utterance, edifieth. The wise man profiteth himself, the eloquent man profiteth others. Knowledge maketh a man commended. A good delivery of speech commendeth the doctrine that is delivered, and maketh it the more acceptable, profitable, and easy to be understood.

Ver. 22. *Understanding is a well-spring of life to them that have it: but the doctrine of fools is (a fountain) of folly.*

True knowledge, called here understanding, is said to be a well-spring of life; for that it ministereth continual instruction to those that are therewith indued, being in this respect like to a fountain flowing with running waters. It telleth men what they are to do, what to shun, what to believe, and how to behave themselves in all estates, 'But the doctrine of fools is a fountain of folly.' The instruction which proceedeth out of the mouths of false teachers or seducers, is but as a fountain or spring of filthy or deadly waters, to wit, of errors and manifold corrupt sayings.

Ver. 23. *The heart of the wise man guideth his mouth aright: and by his lips ministereth instruction.*

Two effects of an understanding heart are herein set down. The one, that it worketh eloquence in the speaker; the other, that it increaseth knowledge in the hearer. 'The heart of the wise man guideth his mouth aright.' The mind of the learned man moderateth his mouth, ministering to him fit words, and directing him for the manner of his speech. 'And by his lips ministereth instruction.' Moreover, by instructing and guiding the lips of the wise speaker, it helpeth the understanding, and edifieth the affection of the hearers.

Ver. 24. *Pleasant speeches are as it were an honeycomb: sweetness to the soul, and health to the bones.*

As the honey is pleasant to the taste, so eloquence delighteth the mind; yea, and cureth sometimes the body. The mind, for the affection is pleased by it; the body, for it willingly stayeth without weariness a long time together, hearing holy and heavenly sayings, and thereby even the bones that were broken do rejoice. The manner and the matter of a holy eloquent speech is sweet and wholesome.

Ver. 25. *There is a way that seemeth straight to a man, the end whereof is the highway to death.*

The same things, as Irenæus speaketh, are to be spoken of the same matter. Wherefore this sentence having been handled before, chap. xiv. 12, is not to be handled again after a new and diverse manner.

Ver. 26. *The soul of the troublesome man troubleth itself: for his mouth recoileth upon himself.*

Such is the fruit of the wise and eloquent tongue, as hath been declared; but the fruit of a troublesome tongue is the trouble of a man's mind oftentimes. For, 'the soul of the troublesome man troub

leth itself: for his mouth recoileth upon himself.' The busybody is in grief and fear of punishment, because he hath spoken false or slanderous words, which cause him to be hated or molested. Thus his mouth recoileth upon him, as a broken bow or a bended sword. Thus, as the prophet speaketh, 'He travaileth with wickedness, and conceiveth a mischief, but shall bring forth a lie. He hath made a pit and digged it, and is fallen into the pit that he hath made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his iniquity upon his own pate,' Ps. vii. 15-17. This judgment of thine, O Lord, upon troublesome tongues is just. Wherefore, let the poison of such be their own bane; let the troublesomeness of their lips fall upon them, Ps. cxl. 10.

Ver. 27. *A wicked man diggeth up evil: and in his lips is as it were burning fire.*

The wicked person doth much hurt by his naughty tongue to himself, he doth also thereby much harm to others. 'A wicked man, or a man of Belial, diggeth up evil.' The ungodly person joineth cruelty with craft, and laboureth by word and deed to entrap his neighbour, and, as we say, to make a pitfold for him. Thus a wicked man diggeth up evil, and, moreover, 'in his lips is as it were burning fire.' Fire consumeth those things which it taketh hold of, and the burning of fire is a sore torment. Whereas then the words which the malicious man uttereth with his lips are as it were fiery coals, they must of necessity work extreme grief, and do much hurt. 'The tongue,' saith James, 'is a fire, or world of iniquity; it setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire by hell,' James iii. 6.

Ver. 28. *A froward person soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth a chief friend.*

There is no mischief to the mischief of the tongue. He is called a froward person that perverteth another man's speeches, or himself uttereth false and deceitful words. Such a one soweth strife, that is, causeth discord, than which there cannot be a greater evil. He is a whisperer that secretly carrieth tales, or backbiteth his neighbour. Such a one separateth a chief friend, that is, maketh strangeness between those who were before most near and dear to each other. It alienateth the prince from the subject, the husband from the wife, the master from the servant, and the friend from his familiar companion.

Ver. 29. *A wicked man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into some evil way.*

He is called a wicked man that goeth about to do some hurt. Such a one enticeth his neighbour, flattereth his very friend, using to him fair speeches and plausible persuasions. 'And he leadeth him into a way that is not good.' He seduceth and bringeth him to some dangerous place, or to some evil course, which tendeth to the undoing of his estate, or to the destruction of his body or soul.

Ver. 30. *He that winketh with his eyes deviseth mischief: (and) he that biteth his lips worketh evil.*

So great is the desire of doing hurt in some, that they tend thereunto with all the parts of their bodies, and, as here is shewed, by outward gestures express their inward evil purposes one to another. 'He that winketh with the eyes deviseth mischief.' That person who useth often to shut and twinkle his eyes, commonly thinketh on some evil, which yet for the time he keepeth close from him to whom he intendeth it; howsoever he signifieth it to his companion. 'And he that biteth his lips worketh evil.' He also that moveth his lips by way of contempt or threatening, or therewith mumbleth and muttereth to himself, will accomplish some mischief or other.

Ver. 31. *The gray head is a crown of glory, when it is found in the way of righteousness.*

The old age is to be revered most which is white, not with gray hairs only, but with heavenly graces. Commendable old age leaneth upon two staves—the one the remembrance of a life well led, the other the hope of eternal life. Take away these two staves, and old age cannot stand with comfort; pluck out the gray hairs of virtues, and the gray head cannot shine with any bright glory. Concerning the gray head, first it is here said, that it is a crown of glory, or a glorious ornament. The white head is worthily said to be a crown of glory. For, first, Hoary hairs do wonderfully become the ancient person, whom they make to look the more grave, and to carry the greater authority in his countenance. Secondly, They are a garland or diadem, which not the art of man, but the finger of God, hath fashioned and set on the head. Thirdly, They are a sign of many troubles passed and dangers escaped; for these and suchlike causes doth the Lord command in his law, 'To rise up before the gray head, and to give

honour to the face of the aged person,' Lev. xix. 32. Then the gray head is a crown of glory, when, as is declared in the latter part of this sentence, it is found in the way of righteousness. Now, it is found in the way of righteousness oftentimes; for wickedness cutteth off the ungodly commonly in the midst of their days, but obedience prolongeth the life of the godly, and bringeth them to old age, and so to gray hairs.

Ver. 32. *He that is slow to wrath is better than the strong man; and he that ruleth his own mind is better than he that winneth a city.*

He that is patient, or not easily provoked to anger, is said to be slow to wrath. Such a one is better than the mighty man; he is more excellent than he that is strong of body; for he can bear reproaches, which are more intolerable burdens than any that are wont to be laid on the backs of the strongest. And again, he hath strength of mind, whereas the strong man hath only the strength of the body. Generally he is said to rule his mind, that subdueth not only wrath, but all other violent affections. Such a one is better than he that winneth a city; for he overcometh those things which are more invincible than towns or castles, even sins, lusts, principalities, and spiritual wickednesses.

Ver. 33. *The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposition thereof is from the Lord.*

The Jews were wont to put lots into some man's bosom or lap, from whence afterwards every man's lot was taken out. Hence it is that mention here is made of casting the lot into the lap. Whereas it is further added, that 'the whole disposition thereof is from the Lord.' The meaning of these words is, that the whole ordering thereof, and the issue of it, is not to be ascribed to chance, labour, or art, but to the providence of the Almighty only. But touching lots, more shall be set down in the eighteenth chapter.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1. *Better is a morsel of dry bread with peace, than an house full of slain beasts with strife.*

A little with love, a little with the fear of the Lord, and a little with righteousness, is sweet and

good. So likewise is a little with ease and quietness, as here is shewed. 'Better is a morsel of dry bread with peace, than an house full of slain beasts with strife.' A little homely fare with quietness is to be preferred before store of dainty dishes, with brawling; for where there is falling out at the table, there food cannot be eaten with any delight.

Ver. 2. *A wise servant shall have rule over a lewd son, and he shall divide the inheritance among the brethren.*

Wisdom lifteth up them that are bound, or of low degree, above the free born. 'A wise servant shall have rule over a lewd son.' He who being by condition a bondman, dealeth discreetly in all his actions, and behaveth himself dutifully toward his master, shall by him be appointed to be guardian and governor unto that his child that is rude and dissolute. 'And he shall divide the inheritance among the brethren.' Moreover, he shall by him be so trusted, that he shall be appointed steward of his family, or left executor to distribute his goods unto his sons.

Ver. 3. *The fining pot is for the silver, and the furnace for the gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts.*

As the vessels which the goldsmith useth prove and try the metals of gold and silver; so God trieth not only the hearts of the elect, but of all men, Mal. ii. 3; Jer. vi. 26; Ps. xxvi. 1; James i. 3; 1 Pet. i. The means whereby the Lord trieth men's hearts, are his works, his word, and his Spirit. These are as the fire; the Lord himself is as the fining pot; the hearts of men are as the metals of silver and gold.

Ver. 4. *The wicked man hearkeneth to hurtful lips; and the deceitful man giveth heed to the froward tongue.*

It is a note of an evil man, not only willingly to speak evil, but gladly to hear evil of his neighbour. The peevish tongue and the elfish ear are well met together, and with a certain itching delight rub one another. 'The evil man hearkeneth to hurtful lips.' He that is given to work mischief listeneth willingly to those speeches that tend to the harm of others. 'And the deceitful man giveth heed to the froward tongue.' The dissembler heareth with joy secret whispering and slanderous reports. Thus that speech pleaseth every evil man

best that is agreeable to his humour, and to the disposition of his mind.

Ver. 5. *He that mocketh the poor man, reproacheth him that made him: he that rejoiceth at his adversity shall not be unpunished.*

Insulting over the afflicted is herein condemned. By the poor, are meant not only such as are in want of outward blessings of this life, but that are afflicted with any adversity. As he that scorneth any work scorneth the artificer; so he that mocketh the poor man mocketh his Maker, who is the Lord. 'He that rejoiceth at his adversity shall not be unpunished. Not only he that scorneth by outward gestures, but he that is glad in his heart at the adversity of the afflicted, shall be severely revenged.

Ver. 6. *Children's children are the crown of the elders: and the glory of children are their fathers.*

A fruitful stock is a blessed thing. 'Children's children are the crown of the elders.' Many nephews, or a great posterity, beseem and commend the aged; for the ancient live long in children's children, and in them they appear to be fruitful and blessed. 'And the glory of children are their fathers.' It is an honour to the younger sort to have descended from many worthy progenitors, and to be able to say, such an excellent man was our father, such a one our grandfather, such a one our great-grandfather.

Ver. 7. *Excellent speech becometh not a wild person: much less doth lying beseem a worthy man.*

By excellent speech, good talk or gracious communication is meant. That speech which is excellent, either in regard of the matter of it, or of the manner of utterance, beseemeth not a wild person, who is contemptible for his wickedness or base degree; for in his mouth it loseth all grace, as a jewel of gold doth in a swine's snout. But then, 'much less doth lying beseem a worthy man.' Corrupt or false communication or speech far worse becometh one that excelleth others in virtue or authority; for his is as a spot or stain upon a fair garment, or a precious stone: it is as dirt in a beautiful face.

Ver. 8. *A gift in his eyes that therewith is delighted, as a very pleasant precious stone; it prospereth whithersoever it tendeth.*

Two things are herein taught: the one, that gifts be welcome to the covetous; the other, that they

obtain anything at their hands. 'A gift in his eyes who therewith is delighted, is as a very pleasant precious stone.' A present doth wonderfully please and affect him that loveth to receive. 'It prospereth whithersoever it tendeth.' It effecteth anything for obtaining whereof it is given; for whether it be given to get an office, or to find pardon for an offence, or to appease wrath, or to win favour, it hath a prosperous success.

Ver. 9. *He that covereth a fault seeketh love: but he that repeateth a matter, separateth the chief friend.*

This sentence commendeth the concealing of our neighbours' offences, and condemneth the blazing of them abroad. 'He that covereth a fault seeketh love.' He that burieth an offence in silence, preserveth concord, and maketh them his friends, who before were strangers to him. 'But he that repeateth a matter, separateth the chief friend.' As for him who rippeth up or telleth abroad a fault committed, he estrangeth his friend from him by this means, and maketh him his enemy.

Ver. 10. *One reproof entereth more into a wise man, than an hundred stripes into a fool.*

Some are easily brought home when they have done amiss; but others are incurable, or, at the least, hardly reclaimed. 'One reproof,' an admonition or rebuke by words, be it never so short, 'more entereth into a wise man,' not only much more grieveth, but bettereth the humble person, that hath in him some sparks of grace, 'than an hundred stripes into a fool;' than correction by the rod or stick, be it never so sharp or continual, doth pierce or benefit the obstinate wicked man.

Ver. 11. *The wicked man seeketh rebellion only: at the last, a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.*

The punishment of rebellion is here set down. 'The wicked man seeketh rebellion only.' The ungodly and contentious person riseth up in arms, and maketh war against his prince. 'At the last, a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.' In the end, some instrument of wrath shall be sent from God or the king, who shall execute vengeance upon him in most cruel manner.

Ver. 12. *It is better that a she-bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, than a fool in his folly.*

Of all wild beasts a bear most exceedeth in rage, especially then when she is robbed of her young

ones. At such a time, to be met by such a fierce beast it were a very dangerous thing. Yet more perilous it is, and a more miserable estate, to fall into the hands of a wicked or furious man: for a bear may be tamed by art, but a fool will not be entreated. A bear may be shunned by swiftness, but there is no escaping of the pursuit of a mad-man. A bear hurteth only the body; a wicked man both body, goods, and name. A bear doth harm only with tooth and paw; a mischievous man with hand, tongue, and weapon. Finally, a bear will at the most but kill the body; a cruel tyrant will vex the soul, and torment the poor carcase as much as he can.

Ver. 13. *Whosoever recompenseth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.*

No vice is so great as unthankfulness; but that kind of ingratitude whereby evil is repaid for good, is a sin above measure sinful. Some are of so devilish dispositions that they deal ill with such who have dealt well with them, and done them much good. 'Evil shall not depart from their houses.' For as their sin is great, so shall they be plagued, not only in their own persons, but in their families; not for a short time only, but continually. To recompense evil for good to any man is a foul fault; to recompense evil for good to the ministers of God's word is a greater iniquity; to recompense evil for good unto the Lord himself, is even the highest degree of all impiety. See an example, Jer. xviii. 19.

Ver. 14. *He that beginneth strife is as he that openeth the waters; wherefore, before the contention be meddled with, leave off.*

A reason is set down in the former part of this sentence, tending to move every one that is about to go to law with his neighbour, in time to agree with him and to stay the suit. The effect of the reason is, the law is costly and dangerous, wherefore, agree before any suit be begun therein. 'He that beginneth strife,' that person who first entereth his cause into the court, 'is as one that openeth the waters,' is like him that unlocketh the well-head, or cutteth the ground or bank whereby a pond or river is hemmed in; for he giveth the first onset, and can no more stay the strife which once he hath begun, than he that hath broken up the ground can hinder the water from rushing out, or stop it at his

pleasure, which overfloweth and waxeth still from time to time even greater and greater. 'Wherefore, before the contention be meddled with, leave off;' for which cause agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him, even before that thou come before the judge, or that the action be commenced into the court.

Ver. 15. *He that justifieth the wicked man, and he that condemneth the just man, are even both an abomination unto the Lord.*

Unrighteousness in judgment is herein condemned. A judge offendeth two manner of ways, either by oppressing the innocent, or freeing the guilty. 'He that justifieth the wicked man,' such a judge as pronounceth the transgressors righteous, 'and he that condemneth the just,' Exod. xxiii. 7, such a judge also as pronounceth the righteous man a transgressor, 'is an abomination to the Lord,' is abhorred by almighty God: for he committeth two great sins, and doth much hurt. He transgresseth God's laws; he spareth the wolf, and so hurteth the lambs; he sheddeth innocent blood, that crieth to heaven for revenge; he abuseth the sword, he toucheth the members of Christ, and the very apples of the Lord's eyes.

Ver. 16. *To what end is there a price in the hand of a fool to buy wisdom, seeing he hath no heart?*

Happy is he that hath both wit and wealth. 'To what end is there a price in the hand of a fool to buy wisdom?' Why or to what purpose doth he that is unapt to learn go with money in his hand to hire him a teacher, or to buy books, when he hath no heart, seeing he is simple-witted, and hath no good capacity? Let such rather follow some other course of life whereunto they are apt and inclined, than in vain bestow too much time or cost on that whereunto they cannot possibly attain.

Ver. 17. *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*

A mark of a true friend is, that he loveth at all times; that is to say, he beareth his friend hearty good-will, and sheweth himself kind unto him both in prosperity and adversity, not for a day or month, but to the death. 'And a brother is born for adversity.' It is the duty of a kinsman to help his kinsman in trouble. Birth bindeth one brother to help another. It is not the custom of brethren to be so kind, but it is their duty.



Ver. 18. *A man void of understanding clappeth the hand : and promiseth suretyship before his friend.*

Beware of suretyship. 'A man void of understanding,' a simple person, who considereth not the danger of suretyship, nor the misery that will follow upon it, 'clappeth his hand,' by putting his hand to his neighbour's, or by joining of right hands proffereth himself to be surety, 'before his friend,' in the sight of his friend, and before that by him he be entreated to take this burden upon him. Thus like a foolish woodcock he putteth his neck into the gin, and rejoiceth in the matter of his own trouble.

Ver. 19. *He loveth sin that loveth contention : he that enlargeth his gate seeketh destruction.*

Strife is the cause of much evil, and pride, from whence contention ariseth, is also the cause of much misery and affliction. 'He loveth sin that loveth contention.' Such a one commonly committeth many sins as willingly goeth to law, or with pleasure followeth the lusts thereof; for commonly suits are accompanied with many evils. Where there is envying and strife, there is confusion and every evil thing, James iii. 16. 'He that enlargeth his gate seeketh destruction.' Such a one, as to get a name, or in pride of his heart keepeth no measure in building, or housekeeping, draweth want on himself, or such envy whereby he is brought to ruin. Thus, in the error of his life, he seeketh his own death and all.

Ver. 20. *He that is of a froward heart shall not find good : and he that hath a perverse tongue shall fall into evil.*

Such a one whose soul within him is unsound and corrupt, so that he falleth away from God and godliness, is said here to be of a froward heart. This backslider shall not find good, for he shall want a blessing from the Lord. 'And he that hath a perverse tongue shall fall into evil.' Such a one as abuseth his tongue to dissimulation, or any evil speaking, shall feel and find in the end some heavy judgment.

Ver. 21. *He that begetteth a fool begetteth him to his own sorrow : and the father of a wild person shall not rejoice.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> The old Latin translator, reading the former part of this sentence with other points, turneth it thus: The fool is born to his own shame; by which words he meaneth that he

He is a foolish son, who either applieth himself to no goodness, or committeth some evil. 'He that begetteth him begetteth him to his own sorrow.' The father of such a son grieveth when he seeth him prove so bad. 'And the father of a wild person shall not rejoice.' He is called a wild person who is given over to all abominable wickedness, whereby he becometh contemptible and infamous. Such a son is such a thorn to his father's heart, that he cannot take comfort in anything in the world.

Ver. 22. *A joyful heart causeth good health : but a sorrowful mind drieth up the bones.*

Mirth greatly profiteth, grief greatly hurteth the body. 'A joyful heart causeth good health.' A merry mind is a wholesome medicine—restoreth the body to health if it be weak, and keepeth it in very good temper; for it conveyeth a vital vigour thereunto, whereby it is quickened and brought to a good constitution. 'But a sorrowful mind drieth up the bones.' A heavy spirit causeth the body to be out of tune, and greatly diseased; for when the heart is sad then the spirits are drawn back, the humours are consumed, and the bones pained with aches, and dried for want of marrow.

Ver. 23. *A wicked man taketh a gift out of his bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.*

One that hath not only an ill cause, but an evil mind, is here called a wicked man. Such a one taketh a gift out of his bosom, draweth forth or delivereth secretly and closely a bribe, to pervert the ways of justice, to overthrow the right, or to stop the course of law, which is the life of the commonwealth. There are divers sorts of gifts, some whereof are lawful, some not lawful. There is a gift of thankfulness, there is a gift of reconciliation, there is a gift of goodwill, all these are lawful. Besides these, there is a gift of corruption; this is unlawful, and is both here and elsewhere in the word of God condemned.

Ver. 24. *In the face of the prudent wisdom is present : but the eyes of the fool are in the ends of the earth.*

The countenance is the glass of the mind, and the star of the countenance is the eye. 'In the face of the prudent wisdom is present.' In the whole bringeth such shame upon himself, as that it may seem that he was born to confusion and misery.

countenance of the discreet person, and in every part thereof, there is a wise moderation ; for in his brows he carrieth calmness, in his eyes modesty, in his cheeks cheerfulness, in his lips comeliness, in his whole face a certain grace and staidness. 'But the eyes of the fool are in the ends of the earth.' On the contrary side, he who is simple or vain governeth not his very eyes aright, but letteth loose unto them the bridle in such sort as that they roll or rove after every vanity, or pry into every corner.

Ver. 25. *A foolish son is a vexation to his father, and a bitterness to his mother.*

Wicked children will recompense their parents with evil, for their benefits which they have bestowed on them. For 'a foolish son is a vexation to his father.' A lewd child is a matter of wrath, and a provocation to him that begat him, stirring him up, by his stubbornness, or misbehaviour, to be offended with him. 'And a bitterness to his mother.' He is also a matter of choler and of much grief to her who bred him, and brought him forth into this world. Thus a wicked son or daughter vexeth both father and mother.

Ver. 26. *It is not good to punish even the good man : to strike the well-disposed is contrary to equity.*

Not only to kill, but never so little to wrong the innocent, is a great sin. 'It is not good to punish even the good man.' It is an evil thing to fine or imprison the righteous person that doth good. 'To strike the well-disposed is contrary to equity.' It is a thing contrary to right, to scourge or afflict him that beareth an honest mind, and is well affected.

Ver. 27. *A wise man spareth his words, and a man of understanding is of a cool spirit.*

Moderation both in speech and affections is now commended. 'A wise man spareth his speech.' A prudent person abstaineth from provoking speeches, and useth very few words. 'And a man of understanding is of a cool spirit.' He that spiritually discerneth what is best to be done, is calm of his affections, and not inflamed with the fire of anger or wrath.

Ver. 28. *Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise : and he that shutteth his lips prudent.*

Silence is a point and sign of discretion. 'Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise.' A very idiot and simple man, abstaining from all signs and speeches of choler, is, for his putting up of a

wrong with patience and silence, thought and said, in that respect and for that time, to do very wisely. 'And he that shutteth his lips prudent.' Moreover, he that muttereth not with his mouth, nor answereth one word, is judged wary and circumspect. Truly, he that useth to hold his peace, and especially that keepeth silence when he is provoked to wrath, provideth well and wisely for his own welfare ; and herein dealeth very warily, that he giveth his adversaries no advantage against him.

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1. *He that separateth himself seeketh a quarrel : he meddleth in every matter.<sup>1</sup>*

Such as separate themselves, either from the friendship of any private person, or from the fellowship of the whole church, are herein very well described. Many a man, through the inconstancy or frowardness of his mind, forsaketh the company of those with whom he hath lived most lovingly and familiarly, and severeth himself from others in heart or course of life. Such a one, when he hath no just reason of his departure or withdrawing himself, seeketh a quarrel ; picketh some occasion of falling out and of departing, and excusing his departure, pleading sometimes this, and sometimes that, to the end he may shew that he breaketh off upon just cause. To conclude, 'He meddleth in every matter.' He stirreth very busily in everything which is done, and catcheth at every word that is spoken, to the end he may take some occasion of breaking concord, or provoke unto contention.

Ver. 2. *A fool is not delighted with understanding, but with those things which are in his own heart.*

The disposition of fantastical people is laid open in this sentence. One property of a conceited fool is, that he is not delighted with understanding ; that is, that he regardeth not, nor yieldeth to the instruction which is taught, or the reasons which are brought by wise men, nor resteth in the advice or counsel of his friends or teachers. Heretics and vain people take as small pleasure as may be in hearing the word, and when they are pressed with the truth they little regard it, and stubbornly reject it.

<sup>1</sup> Here, with the Greek interpreters, with Jerome, and some of sound judgment in our time, I read *lectaana*.

even as the scribes and pharisees, in the days of our Saviour, despised the counsel of God against themselves, Luke vii. 10. Another property of the vain person and fond heretic is, that he is delighted with those things that are in his own heart; that is to say, he wonderfully pleaseth himself in his errors and devices, and in those shows of reasons which his own froward mind ministereth and presenteth unto him. Wherefore the wise are not to marvel that they can no more prevail with this sort of people than they do; nor to spend too much labour in dealing with such, considering that they shall do no good, but lose all their pains.

Ver. 3. *When the wicked man cometh, contempt cometh also, and with the vile person reproach.*

This verse is like unto the second verse of the eleventh chapter of this book, but yet there is some difference between them. Therein is affirmed that contempt accompanieth pride, because the proud person despiseth all others besides himself, and herein it is said, that 'when the wicked man cometh, contempt cometh also,' because the ungodly person regardeth not any, neither is kept back from evil, either by any good counsel, or by fear, or by shame. Likewise when, as in the second part of this sentence, it is said, that 'with the vile person is reproach,' the meaning is, that those who are in themselves base, and who commit vile and filthy things, do reproach others, and revile them oftentimes most impudently. Experience in our days teacheth that the vile person doth not seldom rise up against the honourable, and that the base rascal people do most reproach the faithful ministers of the glorious gospel of Christ Jesus.

Ver. 4. *The words of an excellent man's mouth are as deep waters; the well-spring of wisdom is as a flowing river.*

Fitly are the words of the prudent resembled unto waters, saith one, inasmuch as they both wash the minds of the hearers, that the foulness of sin remain not therein, and water them in such sort that they faint not, nor wither by a drought and burning desire of heavenly doctrine. But the speeches of an eloquent man are here called deep waters, to shew that they fail not, but are plentiful, and that they are not drawn dry at any time, but continually abounding. Now the reason why the

excellent man neither wanteth words or matter, but his words are as deep waters, and his sentences and reasons as flowing rivers, is, for that he hath in his breast or heart a well-spring of wisdom, that is, profound and bottomless knowledge, as it were, of sundry matters and hidden mysteries.

Ver. 5. *It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the just man in judgment.*

Respect of persons is condemned as a great sin in this sentence, wherein less is said, and more is signified; for it is said, that 'to accept the person of the wicked is not good,' but the meaning is that it is a very evil thing. Now to accept the person of any is to regard anything that is without the cause, as honour, friendship, or a gift, more than the truth or equity itself. Only in judgment to lift up the face, or to respect the person of the wicked, is one great fault. But to do this, 'to overthrow the just man in judgment,' is a double sin; for this is with the one hand to lift him up who ought therewith to be beaten down, and with the other to beat him down who ought therewith to be lifted up. When I more fully weigh this parable, methinketh that herein is not taught the self-same point which is often repeated in this book, namely, that to justify the wicked, and to condemn the righteous, both these are abomination to the Lord; but that to punish the innocent, or to cause him to lie down, as the word signifieth, at the request, or to gratify and satisfy the wicked person who is in favour with us, which sin Pilate committed, Luke xxiv. 42, 25, is indeed a great and grievous iniquity. But let those who are abundantly indued with the Spirit of God scan and judge all things.

Ver. 6. *The lips of a fool enter into strife, (or come with strife,) and his mouth calleth for blows.*

Ver. 7. *The mouth of a fool is his own destruction, and his lips a snare to his soul.*

The former sentence of these two declareth that the words or speeches of rash and unwise people stir up two sorts of evils: the one is called strife, that is to say, brabbling, scolding, railing, and such-like debate uttered by the tongue; the other is blows, that is, strokes, fighting, or cuffs, or wounds, by the hand or fist. These two evils fools provoke by rash and malicious speeches, both between others, and between and against themselves, as is shewed

in the latter sentence, the which teacheth that the naughty tongue not only hurteth, but overthroweth him that hath it; for it is said therein, that 'the mouth of a fool is his own destruction, and his lips a snare to his soul.' By the which words is meant that the talk of quarrellers, blabs, backbiters, and slanderers, bringeth upon them much woe, and is the cause and matter of their trouble; for by reason that they speak contrary things, or false things, they are not only hated, but sometimes beaten and buffeted, sometimes called into question in the law, and punished accordingly.

Ver. 8. *The words of the whisperer are as it were strokes,<sup>1</sup> which even go down into the inward part of the belly.*

Many mischiefs are wrought by the lips of the wicked, but none greater than by the speeches of whisperers or secret mutterers and murmurers, for so much the word here used doth signify, דברי נרנן, כמתלהמים. The words of the whisperer are said to be like unto strokes, or, as some translate, unto those that strike, for that they grieve and wound such as are bitten or smitten therewith. They are said to go down into the inward parts of the belly, for that they being like to lashes, which not only raise the skin, but pierce the bowels, wound deeply, and grieve the very heart. A like comparison was used before in this book, chap. xii. 18, where it was said, 'That some utter words like the pricking of swords.' What great hurt and grief to body and soul a whispering and backbiting tongue doth work may appear in the example of Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 20, who through the complaint of his mistress was cast into prison; and again, in the example of David, Ps. lii., who so greatly complained of the slanders of Doeg.

Ver. 9. *He that is negligent in his business is even brother to him that is a waster.*

Carelessness and prodigality are the very banes of the substance of a family. He is said to be negligent in his business who endeavoureth not, or travaileth not, to set forward his work or affairs. Such a one is called a brother to him that is a waster, for that both of them shall be brought to poverty; albeit by divers ways—the one by his pro-

<sup>1</sup> So much the Hebrew word signifieth, as the best learned observe.

digality, the other by his wretchedness; for as the prodigal person consumeth his goods by lavishing them out, so the sluggard suffereth his possessions to decay by not looking to them, or labouring to maintain them. The one spendeth all, the other getteth little or nothing, and thus, as both are unthrifty, so both fall into extreme poverty at the last; yea, in which sense some take this sentence, oftentimes he that is slow to do his own business joineth himself to the company of thieves and robbers, and is swift and quick enough in helping the destroyer.

Ver. 10. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runneth unto it, and is exalted.*

We are exhorted herein to repair unto the Lord in all our distresses and necessities. The name of the Lord is the favour of God towards the elect in Christ, joined together with his mighty power and truth. It is resembled unto 'a strong tower, for that, like a castle, it protecteth and maketh secure those that fly unto it; for the which cause the just man runneth unto it, as he that is pursued by his enemy is wont to fly to some strong tower; so the righteous person, who is justified by the blood of Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, not placing any confidence in earthly things, nor in men, speedily repaireth in time of necessity and adversity, by faith and prayer, unto the mercy and defence of the Almighty. Which, whensoever he doth, he loseth not his labour, for he is exalted or lifted up on high; that is, so preserved from the rage of troubles, and kept out of the reach of all his adversaries,<sup>1</sup> as if he were taken up into some high turret, or set on some place aloft, whither his enemies could not pierce or enter.

Ver. 11. *The substance of the rich man is, as it were, his defenced city, and as an high wall in his imagination.*

What is the strength of the just man hath been declared in the former sentence. In this is shewed what the rich man counteth to be his tower and strong defence. See before, chap. x. 15. Indeed, the wealth of the rich man is a means oftentimes of preserving him from many evils, and of procuring many good things unto him. But some have a very fond and false opinion of riches; for they think that in them there is succour and defence against al-

<sup>1</sup> So did David, Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah.

chances and calamities. But they are deceived; for nothing is weaker, nothing more subject to losses or crosses, than wealth. Wherefore here it is very rightly added, that riches are not a defended city or wall in themselves, or in truth, but in the rich man's imagination. Whereas, then, it is said, 'The substance of the rich man is, as it were, his defended city; the meaning hereof is, that it seemeth so indeed, but is not so in truth. And whereas it is added, that they be also as an high wall in his imagination, the sentence is that they are indeed but a wall of straw, howsoever they appear to be a strong wall. Wherefore let not the rich man trust in the uncertainty of riches, or put any confidence in chariots or horses, or anything besides the name of the Lord, which only is a strong tower, and a sure defended city indeed.

Ver. 12. *Before destruction the heart of a man is puffed up: but lowliness goeth before honour.*

The time herein is noted when destruction and advancement are wont to befall men. 'Before destruction the heart of man is puffed or lifted up;' immediately after that, the mind of a man is secure, rebellious, stout, or exceeding proud and haughty. He that is so high-minded, through God's righteous judgment, is suddenly disgraced, displaced, confounded, and utterly overthrown, or at the least grievously plagned. Of the truth hereof Nebuchadnezzar may be an example, Dan. iv. 30, 31, to whom a voice from heaven sounded, threatening his destruction, the self-same hour wherein, walking in his palace, he arrogated to himself the praise of building and enlarging Babylon, and of all the glory wherein then he flourished. On the contrary side, 'Lowliness goeth before honour;' for at what time a man is humbled by afflictions, and very humble and lowly in his own eyes, so that he thinketh himself the basest of all others, and casteth himself down before the Lord, the Lord is wont to raise him up to comfort or preferment, and to bestow on him some great blessings and graces, as may appear in the examples of all the faithful.

Ver. 13. *For one to answer a matter before he hath heard it, it is a folly and a shame.*

Order is to be observed in all things, but especially in judging of cases. For that judge who, having not heard both parties speak, giveth his verdict, is

unrighteous, although he decree that which is right. Properly, he is said 'to answer a matter before he hath heard it,' who giveth his sentence, or sheweth his opinion, before he hath known the whole sum of his speech that speaketh to him, or of the cause which he is to determine. To him that thus doth 'answer a matter before he hath heard it, it is a folly and a shame.' A folly, for that he speaketh before the time; and a shame, for that all will blame him, and for that he cannot but be ashamed, when he findeth that he hath given a rash or false sentence by reason of his hastiness.

Ver. 14. *The spirit of a man beareth out his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?*

The diseases of the mind are heavier burdens than the sicknesses or sores of the body. 'The spirit of a man beareth out his infirmity.' The mind of a man, if it be sound and courageous, sustaineth with patience the diseases of the body, or any outward cross whatsoever. 'But a wounded or broken spirit who can bear?' What giant or strong man is able, without fainting or shrinking, to endure the torment of a bitter, afflicted soul? No outward comfort of this life can cheer up a woeful spirit; no strength or health of the body, wherein this heavy heart is, can stand firm or sure under the intolerable weight of it.

Ver. 15. *The heart of the prudent possesseth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh after knowledge.*

The heart and the ears are the instruments and means of getting and keeping knowledge 'The heart of the prudent possesseth knowledge.' The mind of the studious person, by meditation and committing of things considered or read to memory, keepeth and increaseth understanding. 'And the ear of the wise seeketh after knowledge.' He that regardeth his own welfare endeavoureth also, by hearing others besides himself, to increase in learning. Wherefore they are to be reprov'd who, as if that they could attain to wisdom enough by their own private meditation or labour, refuse to hear the voice of the ministers of the word.

Ver. 16. *The gift of a man enlargeth him, and bringeth him before great personages.*

There is great force in presents, both to free men out of trouble, and to bring them into favour. 'The gift of a man enlargeth him.' A present delivereth

a man out of adversity, yea, and out of close prisons. Otherwise, without a gift, he may oftentimes stay long enough in trouble and distress ere he shall come out of it. 'And it bringeth him before great personages.' Moreover, a present maketh a man gracious in the eyes of great states, and leadeth him into their presence. Otherwise, with all his learning, he may stand long enough without doors, and never be suffered to enter into the palaces of the great ones of this world.

Ver. 17. *He that is first in his cause seemeth just; then cometh his neighbour and maketh inquiry of him.*

One cause is good till another be heard. 'He that is first in his cause seemeth just.' He that speaketh first maketh oftentimes in his pleading such a show of truth and right, as that, although he hath indeed the worse part, yet he seemeth to have the better. 'But his neighbour cometh and maketh inquiry of him.' Afterward the second party pleadeth in the second place, and detecting the first, or confuting his speeches, sheweth him to be a bad person, or to maintain an evil cause.

Ver. 18. *The lot causeth contentions to cease, and maketh a partition among the mighty.*

The use of a lot is herein shewed, whereunto, in some cases, men are to fly, resting therein as in the oracle of God himself. 'The lot causeth contentions to cease.' When there is great strife or doubt about choosing of officers, or about earthly possessions, or about secret offenders, the lot revealeth the right and truth, and determineth what is to be done, whereunto, as to the voice or work of God, every one that hath reason or religion easily yielding, all wavering and variance by this means cometh to an end. Moreover, the lot 'maketh a partition among the mighty.' When the portions of the spoil or of the inheritance are unequal, some being greater and some less than others, the lot distributeth the parts to be divided in such sort, as that the wealthy and the strong adversaries, who otherwise would never yield one to another, are content with that part which the lot giveth them, and with that end which it maketh, whatsoever it is. Lots may be, after a certain sort, divided in divers kinds, according to the uses whereunto they are applied. First, There is a choosing lot, as it were, which is that whereby any are elected to an office; secondly, There is a con-

demning lot, which is that whereby secret offenders are revealed; thirdly, There is a dividing lot, which is that whereby inheritances or possessions are parted, Lev. xviii. 8; Acts i. 26; Joshua vii. 14; Ps. xxii. 19. These lots were used among the Jews, and may be used also by Christians, all circumstances duly observed, yet not ordinarily. Besides these, there is a fourth, which may be called a divining lot, as when any by casting of lots inquireth of the success of matters to come, which to do is highly to tempt God. Hereunto may be added a fifth, which is ordained for the helping or enriching of some bankrupt, or vain person, by the picking of money out of the purses of simple people, under hope of obtaining some great prize, whereof there is no warrant in Scripture. To conclude, there is also a sixth, which is called by some divines a sporting lot, which, as daily experience testifieth, rather maketh contention arise than causeth it to cease, both among the poor and the mighty.

Ver. 19. *A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city; and their contentions are as the bar of a castle.*

The war that is between natural or spiritual brethren is even almost unreconcilable; for it is said, that 'a brother offended is harder to win than a strong city.' The meaning of this speech is, that a kinsman or friend, displeased by any offence, or estranging himself for an injury offered, resisteth all entreaties of peace and means of reconciliation more stoutly and stiffly than a defended town doth the assaults of the weapon, or the embassages which entreat for peace. 'And their contentions are as the bar of a palace.' Moreover, the suits or strifes which they follow in courts one against another (for these the Hebrew word doth properly note out) cannot be broken off or ended by any means, but are as hard to be brought to composition, or to be decided, as most mighty bars, whereby the gates of a tower or palace are shut in or kept safe, are firm and hard to be broke or cut in sunder; for as they loved most dearly before, so, when once they become enemies, they hate one another most extremely. But especially when brethren fall out, and strive, not about the possessions of this world, but the points of holy religion, then their contentions are most bitter and fierce, and their strifes most durable and endless.

for in these cases the meekest are oftentimes hottest, the motion of the spirit overcoming the disposition of nature, and zeal to the truth consuming the love of brother to brother. But as concerning all wrathful contentions, whether for temporal or spiritual causes, it greatly concerneth those that are at variance to end them with all speed, or, at the least, to seek to be reconciled as much as in them lieth; for our Saviour teacheth in the Gospel, Mat. v. 23, &c., that he who hath offered a wrong, or offended his brother, cannot perform any exercise of religion, or part of God's worship, so as that it shall please the Lord, unless he go first and be reconciled to his brother; and, moreover, the same our heavenly Lord and Master teacheth us, that if the party justly offended by us shall, before we be reconciled, complain of us to the Judge above, then we shall be delivered by the Judge to the jailer, and by him put into prison, even into the prison below, wherein Satan with the damned spirits and souls are chained, even in the chains of darkness and woeful misery, locking them fast and sure until the day of vengeance, at which time they shall be cast into the lake of Gehennah, which burneth with fire and brimstone. We must, then, be reconciled, although we are loath; and we may be reconciled also, although it is a hard matter that brethren offended should renew their friendship; we may, I say, for with God this work is not impossible. The brotherly love of the godly, as an ancient father well resembleth it, is like a graft or scion of a tree.<sup>1</sup> A graft of a tree, after that it hath been pulled away from the bough by force, returneth to his former nature, and happily groweth again; even so, when brotherly love hath departed for a time, or been plucked away, as it were, by violence from the faithful, yet it returneth to the former mild nature which it had at the beginning, and, as it were, waxeth green and fruitful again. Wherefore, seeing it is so dangerous a matter not to be reconciled, and that soon after variance; and seeing it is a thing possible that friends who fall out may renew love one to another, if we have been divided one against another, or a long time together lived in strife, let us not alway make war, or die in hatred, but be rather like the plants, that are easily bent back to their places, or

<sup>1</sup> Naz., Orat. de Per., 2.

the grafts, that, returning to their natures, happily grow, after that they have been parted from the bough—than like to stony walls which cannot be pierced, or bars of iron that will not be broken.

Ver. 20. *With the fruit of a man's mouth shall his belly be satisfied; with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.*

Ver. 21. *Death and life are in the power of the tongue: as every one delighteth to use it he shall eat the fruit thereof.*

Before in this book, chap. xv. 6, a good tongue hath been called a tree of life; as on the contrary side an evil tongue hath been shewed to have been a deadly mischief. The same comparison is used, and the same doctrine is taught, in these two verses. As there is fruit of a tree, so there is fruit of the mouth, which is that joy or sorrow, peace or trouble, prosperity or misery, which a man receiveth according to the desert of his speeches. The belly or soul is satisfied or abundantly replenished with good things or evil, according to the words of his mouth. Again, as there is an increase of the ground or earth, according to the seed that hath been sown therein, be it bad or good; so there is a harvest, either of blessings or calamities, according to those answers, reports, or speeches which the tongue hath uttered. Herewith every one is plentifully filled, both in his soul, and body, and name, according as he hath rightly used or abused his lips. The hurt or benefit of the tongue is not small, but exceeding great: for 'death and life are in the power of the tongue.' A man, by using his tongue aright in talking, exhorting, witnessing, and counselling, may save; and by abusing it in any of these ways, or any other, may destroy. 'As every one delighteth to use it he shall eat the fruit thereof.' He that abuseth the tongue to destroy, shall taste of death for a just recompense; and he that useth it to preserve in life, shall continue in life and happiness. Yea, by thy words, as our Saviour teacheth, thou shalt be justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. It is worthy the observing that Solomon doth vary his words, and speaketh sometimes of the mouth, sometimes of the lips, sometimes of the tongue, to shew that all the instruments or means of speech shall have, as it were, their proper and just reward. The apostle James, chap. iii., useth other comparisons,

wherein he expresseth the nature and effects of the tongue, as of a bridle, a rudder, a fire, a world, a bag of poison, and a fountain; all which similitudes it were good to compare, and to consider together with this here set down.

Ver. 22. *He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.*

The Spirit of God in this sentence commendeth wedlock as a necessary, comfortable, and holy estate; teaching, that he which marrieth, sinneth not, nor hurteth himself, but getteth to himself a great benefit. It was not good at the very time of the creation for man to be alone; much less then is it good now, and much more is it needful, especially for the most, to take unto themselves a fit yoke-fellow. Two are better than one, as the wise man teacheth in the book of the preacher, Eccles. iv. 9, and woe is to him that is alone; which words, howsoever he speaketh to commend the sociable life between friend and friend, neighbour and neighbour, yet do they also shew and prove the comfort and excellency of marriage, which is the nearest and sweetest fellowship in the world. 'He that findeth a wife, obtaineth favour of the Lord,' inasmuch as God not only ordained matrimony from the beginning, but joined the married together, moving and drawing the wife's heart to like of the husband. Many men seek after wives, and can find none to like or accept them. This therefore is a mercy of God, even to find a wife. And although some wives, by reason of their corruption, are crosses to their husbands, yet, as they are wives, they are good, and the Lord's blessings. Nevertheless, men are not therefore to be careless in their choice, or to take every one whom they may have; for if a wife be a blessing, a good wife is a great good blessing. And if he obtaineth favour of God that findeth a wife, much more he that findeth a virtuous wife. And if a wife is not found but by God's favour, she is to be sought for and sued for unto the Lord. And, to conclude, if such a wife flow out of the fountain of God's favour, as was Eve at the beginning, who was called Isha, which word here is used, then such a wife as may be a helper rather than a hinderer is only sought for and chosen, as a daughter of the heavenly king, and not a limb of Satan. Yet, notwithstanding that a wife is so good a blessing for

some persons, in some times it is better to remain unmarried, than to marry.

Ver. 23. *The poor man speaketh supplications: but the rich man answereth roughly.*

The course of men's behaviour, both in prosperity and adversity, is touched in this verse. 'The poor man speaketh supplications.' He that is a beggar, a bondman, a prisoner, or any way afflicted, is wont to behave himself very lowly and slavishly toward him that is wealthy or mighty, especially when he hath any suit unto him. 'But the rich man answereth roughly.' On the contrary side, he that hath abundance of goods, or is in authority, albeit the poor man speaketh never so submissively, yet answereth him curiously and stoutly, and even rateth and revileth him as a dog. Commonly thus it is, but yet not always; for some of the lowest sort speak most disdainfully, and again, some great personages behave themselves most courteously. This sentence then is thus to be understood, that usually poor people are lowly in their behaviour, and the rich scornful and haughty.

Ver. 24. *A man that hath many friends is to shew himself friendly (or to maintain friendship): but some one lover there is who is nearer (or cleaveth, to wit, in hearty good-will, above a brother) than a brother.*

We are exhorted in this instruction to cherish amity and maintain friendship as much as in us lieth. 'A man that hath many friends is to shew himself friendly.' He that hath great acquaintance is to hold in with every one of his well-wishers, to which end he is not only to take heed, lest by strangeness or offering of discourtesy he lose the liking of any, but to endeavour, by all signs or pledges of good-will, to knit the hearts of all faster and faster unto him. 'But some one lover there is that is nearer than a brother.' Now, moreover, among many friends there is some one especial and extraordinary loving mate, whose heart above all others, yea, above a natural brother, is glued unto his neighbour, in such sort as that he is ready to do anything for his good, yea, to die for him, which no common friend or kinsman lightly will do. A brother loveth naturally, but scant any brother is to be found that will die for his brother. Wherefore, above the rest such a one is to be loved, and to be preferred before all precious jewels. Never-



theless, love is also to be shewed to every friend, and every loving neighbour; for the loadstone of love is love. Commonly, he that loveth not, is not loved. Hence it is that the heathen give this precept, Love, that thou mayest be loved.

### CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1. *Better is the poor man that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is of froward lips, and is a fool.*

Albeit poverty is a burden, and is counted a great cross, yet it doth not hinder a man from behaving himself virtuously. Wherefore, 'the poor that walketh in his uprightness,' that needy person who feareth God, and dealeth justly with men, is in a good and happy estate; yea, he is 'better than he that abuseth his lips, and is a fool.' He is more acceptable to the Lord, and more blessed than such a one as abuseth his tongue to evil speaking, and whose heart is full of vanity or wickedness. Not that he which lieth or slandereth, or abuseth his tongue, pleaseth God, or hath in him any goodness at all; but by this phrase is meant, that the one is good, the other naught—the one blessed, the other wretched. Wherefore such as are in want or affliction are not to think that God hath forsaken them, or that they are more miserable than others who are in prosperity or unchastened, although they walk in the ways of wickedness. No, no; the just God loveth the righteous, be they never so poor, and curseth and abhorreth all those that speak lies, or are workers of iniquity, be they never so rich.

Ver. 2. *Both the soul without knowledge is not good; and he that hasteneth with his feet offendeth.*

Ignorance of the mind is affirmed in the former part of this sentence to be a hurtful and evil thing. 'The soul without knowledge is not good.' The mind, if it be void of understanding, and without the knowledge of the Scriptures and Christ Jesus, is corrupt, uncomfortable, and unhappy. The errors, the terrors, the lusts and conceits of the soul that is not lightened by the word of God, are many and horrible. As our Saviour teacheth in the Gospel, if thine eye be dark, how great is that darkness? Wherefore the mind is to be furnished with the knowledge and skill of arts and

sciences, and especially of the mysteries of the word of God. In the second part of the sentence, rashness or hastiness is condemned; for it is said, that he also 'that hasteneth with his feet offendeth;' that is to say, that such a one as suddenly or rashly goeth about, or executeth matters of weight or importance without deliberation or advisement, runneth into many errors and inconveniences. Wherefore that was good counsel which was given to a captain by a renowned emperor among the Gentiles, Make slow haste. We have in our English tongue a true and wise proverb, agreeing with this divine sentence of Solomon, which is, Haste maketh waste. Let us then, when we go about any work, look to our feet, and stay them from such rash swiftness as may do much hurt, and work repentance.

Ver. 3. *The foolishness of a man overthroweth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord.*

Murmuring against God is condemned in this sentence. 'The foolishness of a man overthroweth his way.' The corrupt behaviour of a sinner draweth upon him sundry crosses and losses, yea, and sometimes death and destruction; for sin raiseth up God's judgments, and causeth men to have ill success. When people either commit idolatry, or practise unrighteousness, or despise the word, or abuse the Lord's sacraments, then followeth and falleth upon them some sickness or trouble, one way or another. Now when the scourge of God lieth sore upon the transgressors, then 'his heart fretteth against the Lord.' When the offender feeleth himself to be plagued, he accuseth God as the author of his evil and adversity, or murmureth against him for dealing so sharply with him. Oh, saith he, not openly, but to himself, what fortune and luck is this! yea, what a God is this that spareth others, and dealeth so rigorously with me! Thus he is wroth even against the Almighty, who neither did him any wrong, nor can be hurt by him, nor will cease executing of his just judgments on foolish men.

Ver. 4. *Riches gather many friends: but the poor man is separated from his neighbour.*

The disposition of men is herein noted, who, through covetousness, commonly follow the friendship of the rich, neglecting and forsaking the poor. Wherefore the poets often complain, and Solomon

hath in part spoken before, chap. xiv. 20 ; albeit there is some difference between that parable which hath been already set down concerning this matter, and this, which wherein it lieth he that compareth both may easily perceive. ' Riches gather many friends.' Treasures increased increase the number and heap of such as pretend good-will, and draw daily new friends. The persons of men do not this, nor their graces, but their riches. As flies come to the honey, and wolves to the carcasses, so flattering friends to the prey. They are friends which love not the rich man, but follow and love his riches. These riches draw suitors to wealthy gentlewomen, and make marriages, and procure favour. ' But the poor man is separated from his neighbour.' Every one forsaketh him, and breaketh off friendship with him who is needy or afflicted. As the rats leave the barn, so worldlings forsake him that is decayed or falleth into poverty. Thus they should not do, but thus they do and will do.

Ver. 5. *A false witness shall not be unpunished ; and a forger of lies shall not escape.*

The Lord giveth this charge in his law, saying, ' Thou shalt not bring up a false report : thou shalt not put forth thine hand with the wicked by playing the wrongful witness,' Exod. xxiii. 1. This statute was grounded on great equity and reason ; for the false witness doth much hurt, and sinneth against God, whose truth he perverteth ; and against the judge, whose judgment he troubleth ; and against him that is accused, whom he causeth to be otherwise dealt with than he deserveth. To shew how careful every one ought to be of observing the precept of the Lord, which hath been specified, and how great a sin the transgression thereof is, the Holy Ghost herein setteth down a severe threatening, both against the false witness-bearer, who, in the seat of judgment, telleth an untruth ; and the liar, who there or anywhere uttereth a falsehood. ' A false witness shall not be unpunished.' He that testifieth an untruth before a judge shall be severely revenged and punished, either in his person or goods ; either with a temporal penalty, or with eternal punishment. Moreover, ' A forger or speaker of lies shall not escape.' He which in private places telleth any untruths, whereby his neighbour is hurt or deceived, shall not always be free from God's plagues

or judgments, howsoever for a time he lieth in prosperity ; for God will destroy all that speak lies.

Ver. 6. *Many sue unto the face of the noble person ; and every one is a companion to him that giveth gifts.*

In the former part of this sentence is declared that the disposition and custom of most men is, in humble manner and reverent sort, to seek for the favour of great and bountiful personages, and to put up supplications unto them. For it is said therein, that ' many sue unto the face of the noble person.' How true this is, the deeds of all sorts of people declare, who are wont to send presents to such as are in any countenance or authority, and to kneel and crouch unto them. Again, ' Every one is a companion to him that giveth gifts.' All, almost without exception, resort unto that person, and join themselves in fellowship with him that is liberal, or maketh them good cheer. Thus, as one among the heathen truly and justly complaineth, Many are friends for the pot and the cup, but very few in a matter of labour and virtue.

Ver. 7. *All the brethren of the poor man hate him, how much more will his friends depart from him who followeth words that are not performed ?*

It is manifest that the bond of brotherhood or kindred is greater and nearer than the knot of common friendship or acquaintance. Again, it is evident that poverty is a less cause or reason why a brother should be hated than lying or vain prattling ; why a companion should be forsaken. Wherefore, in this parable the wise king reasoneth forcibly, and concludeth firmly, that seeing brethren will hate brother for his poverty, friends will much more forsake a friend for his counterfeiting, and for his false speeches. ' All the brethren of the poor man hate him.' All his nearest kinsmen that is in adversity despise him in their hearts. ' How much more will his friends depart from him who followeth words that are not performed ?' How much more will such as are no kinsmen, but companions only, estrange themselves from him, who only speaketh fairly or glossingly, but doth not those things where he maketh show in his words, or which belong to the duty of a friend ?

Ver. 8. *He that possesseth his heart loveth his own soul ; and he that keepeth understanding shall obtain thereof which is good.*

Every one hath a heart, but every one possesseth not his heart. He possesseth his heart, that, furnishing it with knowledge of the truth, holdeth his heart firm and fast therein, not suffering his courage to fail, nor losing that good possession which he hath gotten. Such a one loveth his own soul. For herein, in so doing, he provideth well for his own welfare and life, inasmuch as out of the heart proceed the issues of life, and if that be safe and sound, all is well. Again, 'He that keepeth understanding shall obtain that which is good.' He that not only heareth good instruction, but laying it up faithfully in his remembrance, observeth the same in the course of his life, and retaineth it until death, shall find many blessings, both of this life, and of the life to come.

Ver. 9. *A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that forgeth lies shall perish.*

This verse is a repetition and a brief exposition of the fifth verse of this chapter. In that it was said that the liar shall not escape, in this it is affirmed that he shall perish; by comparing of which words together we may gather and conclude, that he that forgeth or uttereth lies shall surely and sorely be plagued.

Ver. 10. *Pleasure is not comely for a fool, much less for a servant to bear rule over princes.*

An argument is herein brought to condemn the rule of a servant over nobles or freemen. 'Pleasure is not comely for a fool.' Abundance of wealth, dainty fare, and pastime or recreation, is not meet for a vain and wicked person. For first of all, He rather deserveth correction than recreation; secondly, He abuseth all his delights and possessions to his own hurt, being drunken with his vanities; last of all, He is so puffed up and corrupted by prosperity, that he oppresseth his neighbours, neigheth after their wives, and doth great hurt unto himself and others. If pleasure is not comely for a fool, 'much less for a servant to bear rule over princes.' For if a light vanity beseem not a vain person, then authority, which carrieth with it a weight of glory, less beseemeth a vile person, who is of a servile disposition and condition, especially that rule which is exercised over noble personages. This is that great evil which Solomon elsewhere saith he saw under the sun, when he telleth that he beheld

foolishness placed in high and lofty seats, and worthy men sitting below, and that he beheld also servants sitting on horseback, and princes walking on foot, as servants upon the ground, Eccles. x. 3. Yea, this is one of the chiefest of those heavy burdens which Agur affirmeth to cause the earth to sink and tremble, Prov. xxx. 22. This is a more uncomely and hurtful thing than for a fool to enjoy his pleasure; for pleasure is therefore unseemly for a fool, because he cannot rule himself; but honour must needs be more unseemly for a servant, seeing he neither can rule himself; neither can the honourable brook to be in subjection to the vile, the wise to the simple, the virtuous to the wicked.

Ver. 11. *The understanding of a man maketh him slow to wrath; and his glory is to pass by an offence.*

Such is the frailty of man that he cannot but be provoked unto anger now and then. 'But the understanding of a man maketh him slow to wrath.' The heavenly wisdom of God, which is in the mind of a regenerate person, causeth him not rashly to be angry, nor to proceed therein, but to bridle it, and pacify himself. For he that is indued with understanding, considereth that he himself hath sinned more against God than his neighbour hath done against him, and that wrath is a vile and sinful affection, which therefore is not to be yielded unto, and that he may at another time debate the matter with his neighbour more fitly. Now as the understanding of a man maketh him slow to wrath, so it is his glory to pass by an offence; even to forgive the great wrong and injury which with a certain contempt is done unto him, or to wink at it, and let it go unrevenged. For herein he shall imitate the Lord, who passeth by and pardoneth our iniquities. Moreover, he shall get the commendation of men, who will say that he is a very meek and patient creature. Last of all, when in time and place he letteth pass revenge, or will not seem to hear the railings of his adversary, he sheweth wisdom, and by this forbearing may afterward win his enemy's heart, and draw a commendation out of his mouth.

Ver. 12. *The indignation of a king is as the roaring of a young lion; but his favour is as the dew upon the grass.*

This parable sheweth what care subjects should have not to provoke or offend their prince or

governor. As the eye of the lion is fearful, so his roaring is most terrible and deadly. As the prophet Amos speaketh, 'The lion roareth, who can but fear?' As Ambrose, an ancient holy father, witnesseth: Naturally there is such terror in the voice of the lion, that many living creatures, which by swiftness might escape his force and violence, through the sound of his roaring, fall down astonished, and by it, as it were by a mighty blow, are struck to the ground.<sup>1</sup> Whenas then the indignation of a king is said to be as the roaring of a young lion, the meaning is, that it is most terrible and deadly. Thus much the wise king afterward teacheth in this book, when he saith, 'The terror of a king is as the roaring of a lion: he that provoketh him sinneth against his own soul,' chap. xx. 2. On the contrary side, 'His favour is as the dew upon the grass.' The dew is a moisture which is made in the nights, when the sky is clear. As soon as it falleth down, it is resolved into a shower, which maketh the ground fruitful, chap. xv. 16. By it the fields are refreshed, and the tender grass drawn out of the earth, and preserved in the time of heat from withering, and from the scorching of the sun. In like manner the favour of the prince maketh the subjects rich, raiseth them up to honour, rejoiceth their hearts, and protecteth them from evil.

Ver. 13. *A foolish son is a breaking to his father: and the contentions of a wife are like a continual dropping.*

They that are married, as the apostle teacheth, shall have afflictions in the flesh. Two of these afflictions or evils, which oftentimes befall the governors of families, are set down in this sentence—the one, by a foolish son, the other, by a brawling wife. 'A foolish son is a breaking to his father.' An ungodly child by his wickedness doth break and grieve the heart of his father in such sort as that he can hardly recover it, yea, and is sometimes utterly undone by this means. 'And the contentions of a wife are like a continual dropping.' For as drops and showers of rain do hurt buildings, and annoy those persons which are therein all night or all day, so brawling women by their scolding greatly and continually molest their families and husbands. Seeing the case standeth thus, parents should be

<sup>1</sup> Ambr. Hexa., lib. vi. cap. 3.

very careful to train up their children in the fear of the Lord, and such as go about marriage should be very circumspect in choosing to themselves such as may live lovingly with them.

Ver. 14. *House and substance are the inheritance of fathers: but a prudent wife is from the Lord.*

This proverb warneth the unmarried to seek unto the Lord by prayer for a happy match, as a gift which is not common to all, nor descendeth, as it were, from father to child, as doth an inheritance, but which is proper to a few, even to those whom the Lord doth favour after a special sort. 'House and riches are the inheritance of fathers.' A dwelling-place and goods of this life are those things which children, by right of inheritance and succession, do ordinarily and commonly and mediately receive from fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers; for ancestors having gotten these things by labour, and kept them by care, do in good-will leave and give them to their posterity from hand to hand, albeit the Lord also doth move them so to do. 'But a prudent wife is from the Lord.' A virtuous wife is not an inheritance, but a free and special gift—not a gift of parents, but an immediate gift of the Father of lights; not a gift of industry, but of destiny, that I may so speak. For God giveth wisdom to the woman, and moveth her heart to like the suitor to whom he should join her, and directeth the suitor to make a good choice. All good things come from God originally, but not so immediately or singularly as marriage.

Ver. 15. *Slothfulness causeth heavy sleep to fall: and the idle person shall suffer hunger.*

Sloth bringeth sleep, and sleep poverty. The two effects of sluggishness which here are set down are evil, and greatly to be shunned. Heavy sleep depriveth a man of the use of his reason, hindereth him from labour, and maketh him lose his time, and to be like a dead man. Hunger, which is the second evil, pincheth the belly, moveth to steal, and worketh in the end death itself. Nothing is herein said but that which daily experience sheweth to be most true and manifest. The reason why slothfulness causeth heavy sleep is, for that the head is oppressed with abundance of humours, and the whole body disposed to rest when the members thereof do no labour, nor the mind, wherein it is, take any though or care.

Ver. 16. *He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul: but he that regardeth not his ways shall be punished with death.*

This sentence declareth the fruit of the commandment observed or transgressed, lest any should think it were a small matter to keep it or break it. 'He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul.' That person which observeth God's law and the king's law, preserveth the life both of his soul and body, and shall be blessed. 'But he that regardeth not his ways shall be punished with death.' Such a one as careth not how he liveth, or breaketh God's commandments, or the statutes of the land wherein he liveth, shall be recompensed with temporal or eternal death, which is the reward of sin; yea, and shall be made a public spectacle of shame and vengeance.

Ver. 17. *He that giveth frankly to the poor lendeth to the Lord: and he will repay him his recompense.*

We are exhorted in this divine and excellent parable unto the bestowing of alms. He that giveth—that person which bestoweth anything freely, without looking for any reward, and only respecting the want of him that is needy; he, I say, that giveth frankly, with a merciful, pitiful, and bountiful affection of the heart, which maketh the work acceptable; 'He that giveth frankly to the poor,' the needy, the sick, the helpless creature, lendeth—parteth with his goods, not for ever, but for a time, as lenders do. He lendeth to the Lord; not to a mortal man, but to the immortal God, 'and he will repay him his recompense.' The Lord will not only pay for the poor man, but requite him that gave alms, with usury, returning great gifts for small. Give, then, thine house, and receive heaven; give transitory goods, and receive a durable substance; give a cup of cold water, and receive God's kingdom. According to the words of the Holy Ghost, which here are set down, our Saviour in the Gospel saith, that which you have done to one of these little ones, you have done to me, Mat. xxv. 40. He that bestoweth his goods on the poor is so far off from losing hereby, that, on the contrary side, by this means he gaineth greatly. If our rich friend should say unto us, Lay out so much money for me, I will repay it, we would willingly and readily do it. Seeing, then, our best friend, yea, our king, the King of kings, biddeth us

give to the poor, promising that he will see us answered for that we give, shall we not bestow alms at his motion and for his sake?

Ver. 18. *Correct thy son whilst there is hope: but lift not up thy soul to kill him.*

Ver. 19. *Being in great wrath, remit the punishment: but if thou let him escape, yet apply (or add) chastisement again.*

Parents are exhorted in these sentences to chasten their children in moderation. 'Correct thy son whilst there is hope.' Chasten thy child by words and stripes, whilst, being young and tender, he is not yet grown stubborn, or past hope of amendment. There is hope in youth, because tender things may easily be bended hither and thither, and evils at the beginning may without great difficulty be cured and remedied. 'But lift not up thy soul to kill him.' Yet, in any case, exceed not measure in thy correction, nor set thy mind in thy furious mood to slay him with too much beating, or else to wish him in his grave. 'Being in great wrath, remit the punishment.' When thou art in thy mood, or burnest with fiery anger and displeasure, let pass for that time the correcting of thy child, lest thou passest measure therein, or mayest chance to give him some deadly blow. 'But if thou shalt let him escape, yet apply chastisement again.' Nevertheless, if for that time or for that fault thou let him go free, yet let him not always go uncorrected; but when thou art more calm, according as he offereth occasion, correct him again.

Ver. 20. *Hearken to counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise at the last.*

We have in this verse an exhortation, and a reason thereof. The exhortation persuadeth to two duties; the one to hearken to counsel, the other to receive correction or instruction. To hearken to counsel is to lend an ear to wise admonitions or precepts; to receive correction or instruction is willingly or patiently to bear reproofs or chastisements. The reason of the exhortation is, 'that thou mayest be wise at the last,' that in the end thou mayest attain to grace and everlasting glory; for the present time, afflictions and admonitions seem bitter, but afterwards they work the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Ver. 21. *Many devices are in the heart of man: but the counsel of the Lord shall stand.*

The difference between the Lord's counsels and men's is herein declared ; men's counsels are changeable, for 'many devices are in the heart of a man.' The intents of men's minds and the cogitations thereof are infinite, changeable, contrary to each other, and so vain as that oftentimes they never come to effect. 'But the counsel of the Lord shall stand,' Ps. xxxiii. 10-11. As concerning the decree of God, it is one and the same, it cannot be hindered by any human devices, but shall in due season be accomplished. As the prophet David teacheth, 'The Lord maketh frustrate the counsel of the Gentiles ; he maketh void the thoughts of the people ; but the counsel of the Lord shall remain for ever, and the thoughts of his heart from generation to generation.'

Ver. 22. *The desire of a man is his relief : but a poor man is better than a liar.*

The thing desired by a man is called here his desire, by a figure usual in this book. That which is earnestly wished and craved by a man in his necessity, is relief, or receiving of alms. Hence it is that many commend, as is afterward said, the man of their bounty or relief, to wit, who hath been bountiful to them or relieved them. 'But a poor man is better than a liar.' Yet he that is in necessity, or craveth alms, is more acceptable to the Lord, and more worthy to be esteemed by men, than a false-dealing rich man, yea, or any man that useth deceit ; for the poor man sinneth not in begging, but the liar sinneth in lying : the bare man is indeed punished with his desire, but the liar shall be punished in hell fire.

Ver. 23. *The fear of the Lord bringeth life, and he that is indued therewith shall remain satisfied, and shall not be visited with evil.*

Three good things which make a man happy are herein attributed to the fear of the Lord. The first is life, without which other good things cannot be. The second is plenty, which how great a good thing it is, may appear in that want is so great a misery. The third is protection or freedom from evils ; for he that feareth God shall not be visited with evil. To live, and yet to be in adversity, is to die. To live in plenty, and yet to want heart's ease or health, is a misery. Not to be visited then with evil is a great mercy. But lest we mistake this promise,

we must know that the godly are not always free from affliction, but from hurtful affliction, nor preserved from adversities, but from those adversities that are punishments of sin or signs of God's heavy wrath.

Ver. 24. *The slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not put it to his mouth again.*

Wonderful is the slothfulness of some persons. 'The slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom.' The sluggard doth not work with his hand, but holding it back from labour, giveth himself to ease. 'And he will not put it to his mouth again.' To avoid the cold, and for love of ease, he holdeth his hand still in a warm place, and though there is but a little way from the bosom to the mouth, yet he will not bring it thither, no, not to feed himself. Some are so sluggish that they will not set their hands to most easy and needful works, as for example to wash their faces or to comb their heads. Afterward in this book it is said, that it grieveth the sluggard to put his hand to his mouth again, so that though he do this sometimes yet he doth it with grief.

Ver. 25. *If thou smite a scorner, he that is simple will be made wary : and if thou reprove a prudent man, he will understand knowledge.*

By two means are they which offend of simplicity or infirmity amended ; to wit, by the punishments of the wicked, and speeches of the godly. 'If thou smite a scorner, he that is simple will be made wary.' If thou scourge or put to death an obstinate offender, thy correction peradventure will do him no good, but yet it will do good to him that erreth of simplicity, whom it will make more wary of his words and actions than he was before. The simplest person gathereth out of another's trouble or danger, that he is to beware of that which caused him to be afflicted. Again, 'If thou reprove a prudent man, he will understand knowledge.' Moreover, if thou rebuke a well-disposed person, who hath been overtaken in some sin, both he and the simple one that standeth by will thereby receive profit. A like sentence to this is afterward set down in this book, but there is yet some difference between this and that : for there it is said, that 'when the scorner is punished, he that is simple waxeth wise : and when a wise man is instructed, he will receive knowledge.'

chap. xxi. 11. But here Solomon speaketh of smiting, there more generally of punishing or of sinning, which may be done without striking; here of wariness, there of wisdom; here of reproof, there of instruction.

Ver. 26. *He that spoileth his father, or chaseth away his mother, is a son of confusion and shame.*

The lewd behaviour of an ungracious child is not only herein described, but with a certain detestation reprov'd. First, The wicked child spoileth his father, that is, robbeth even him that begat him of his goods, either by taking them away, or by diminishing them through riot and excess. Again, 'He chaseth away his mother.' That is, he causeth her that bare him to fly from his presence, or out of the house where she is, either by railing upon her, or by turning her out of doors, when once he cometh to his inheritance. He that doeth thus 'is a son of confusion and shame,' one that by his evil life and abominable speeches shameth and reproacheth his parents, and shall himself in the end come to destruction and confusion.

Ver. 27. *Leave off, my son, to hear (לשנות) the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge.*

It is not possible for a man to be a fit hearer of the doctrine of truth, so long as he willingly lendeth an ear to the counsel or persuasions of the ungodly. Divers are hindered from coming into the truth, not so much by a hatred thereof in themselves, as by too much love or zeal which they bear to false teachers, by whom they are kept in ignorance, and infected with many fond opinions. Hence it is that the prophet David pronounceth him blessed who neither hath walked in the counsel of the wicked, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful, but delighteth in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth exercise himself both night and day, Ps. i. 1. Hence it is also that Solomon here, speaking as it were to some one of his children whom he observed too long to follow after false teachers and evil ways, saith unto him, 'Leave off, my son, to hear the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge.' As if he had said, Let it be sufficient that thou hast spent the former times in embracing of heresies and following after vanities, henceforward, seeing thou art in great

danger of erring if thou lendest thine ears to false prophets; renounce them and despise their erroneous doctrines, that so thou mayest become a fruitful hearer of holy instructions.

Ver. 28. *A wicked witness mocketh at judgment: and the mouth of the ungodly swalloweth up iniquity.*

Ver. 29. *But judgments are prepared for these scorers, and stripes for the backs of fools.*

In these holy proverbs the Spirit of God thundereth against notorious witnesses, and ungodly evil men. 'A wicked witness mocketh at judgment.' A false, dissembling witness maketh no account of truth or equity, nor careth for God's law. 'And the mouth of the ungodly swalloweth up iniquity.' Moreover, the tongues of wicked men utter lies without fear or shame, and their mouths are full of cursing and evil speaking, making no bones at the most abominable speeches that possibly may be uttered. These witnesses of Belial and sons of the devil are like to the pharisees, who swallowed up camels, that is, great and mighty iniquities. 'But judgments are prepared for these scorers.' Nevertheless, sentences of condemnation, and decrees of vengeance, are set down and registered concerning the punishing and plaguing of these deriders. 'And stripes for the back of fools.' Moreover, scourges and weapons of destruction are made ready for the bodies of the ungodly, which shall not lightly be chastened, but grievously and extremely tormented. Thus they that willingly and wittingly break the Lord's commandments, and even sell themselves, as it were, to work wickedness, shall be judged by the Lord, and by him heavily plagued and revenged, either in this life or in the life to come, or in both.

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## CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1. *Wine is a mocker, and strong drink is raging: whosoever erreth therein is not wise.*

This holy proverb warneth every one to take heed that he abuse not wine or strong drink, delighting too much therein. Three evils proceed from the abuse thereof. The first is, that it is a mocker, or causeth men to mock, to be vain, talkative, secure, wanton, and full of jollity. Hereunto, as it seemeth, the apostle Paul alluding, exhorteth the Ephe-

sians not to be filled with wine, wherein, saith he, is excess, or rather intemperancy, Eph. v. 18 ; meaning that they who excessively drink wine are by this means inclined and inflamed to lust and suchlike vices. The second effect of drink that is too heady is, that it is raging ; that is to say, it causeth contention, brawling, fighting, and murder. For strong drink stirreth up the passion of anger, and maketh men so bold that they fear nothing. The last evil is foolishness, for it is said, 'whosoever erreth, or is delighted therein, is not wise.' The reason hereof is, for that it weakeneth the memory, confoundeth the judgment, and dulleth the wit, according to our common proverb, wherein we say, that when the wine is in the wit is out. The prophet Hosea speaketh to this effect of drunkenness, when he saith, 'Fornication, wine, and sweet strong drink take away the heart,' Hosea iv. 11.

Ver. 2. *The fear of the king is as the roaring of a young lion : he that provoketh him sinneth against his own soul.*

The former part of this sentence hath fully been expounded before, chap. xix. 12, and xvi. 14. The meaning of the latter part is manifest. 'He that provoketh him,' he that stirreth the king to wrath by disobedience, or any manner of way, 'sinneth against his own soul ;' not only defileth his soul with a grievous transgression, but endangereth his life by incurring vengeance, and laying it open to the sentence of death.

Ver. 3. *It is an honour to a man to cease from strife : but every fool will be meddling.*

This sentence teacheth two points ; the one that peace and concord is to be ensued, the other that strife is to be shunned. 'It is an honour to a man to cease from strife.' It is not only a benefit to end a controversy, which is commonly a chargeable thing ; but a glory, for it is a sign of wisdom, of courage, and of a quiet mind, as, on the contrary side, contention is a token of a vile and effeminate disposition. The Scripture commendeth Abraham for his care that he had of concord, and propoundeth him as a pattern for us to follow, Gen. xiii. 8. 'But every fool will be meddling.' Such as are unwise, on the contrary side, love contentions and suits of law, and either begin or maintain great quarrels, whereby they shew themselves to be stark fools, in-

asmuch as by this means they not only procure unto themselves great troubles, but incur great infamy and reproach, being counted and called by all that know them, or hear of their dealings, brabblers and quarrellers.

Ver. 4. *The slothful man will not plough because of winter ; wherefore he shall beg in summer (or in harvest), and have nothing.*

Tender and fearful sluggishness is herein condemned. It is to be observed, that it is not simply said that 'the slothful man will not plough,' but that he will not plough, 'because of winter.' Indeed, the winter is cold, but yet it is the season fit for ploughing. But because the weather is hard, the sluggard will not work. This is a pretence ; it is no just cause to hinder any from labour. Many young men, to the end that they may spend their time in idleness, pretend the cold or the heat ; so do the people of these times, who, by the sharpness or heat of the weather, are easily kept from church. To conclude, so do these ministers who, because the times are hard and perilous, neglect the doing of many necessary duties which they are bound to perform. Seeing 'the slothful man will not plough because of winter, therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing.' When others reap, he shall starve ; for men will not nor ought to give to those that will not work, 2 Thes. iii. Were it not then better to endure some cold at the beginning, than extreme famine in the end ?

Ver. 5. *The counsel in the heart of man is like deep waters : but a man of understanding will draw it out.*

This sentence may either so be understood as if thereby were meant that a prudent man, abounding with counsel, doth draw it out as occasion serveth, or so as if thereby were taught, that one that is witty and wise can pierce into secret purposes and counsels, which interpretation best agreeth to the Hebrew words. 'The counsel in the heart of man is like deep waters.' The secret intent of the mind and purpose of the heart is by some oftentimes so cunningly hidden and closely concealed in the secret corners and bottom of the soul, that every one cannot easily perceive or sound the same. 'But a man of understanding will draw it out.' Nevertheless, he that is indued with discretion, or hath a politic head, soundeth and fisheth out the secret purpose of him that is so close, either by propounding of ques-



tions, or by observing of gestures, or by some such-like means. As, therefore, deep waters can hardly be sounded or drawn out, so counsel that is secret can hardly be perceived. But yet, as with a long line and with much labour, even deep waters may be sounded and drawn dry; so by a sharp wit, and many means used, hidden thoughts may be discerned and understood.

Ver. 6. *Many commend the man that is beneficial unto them: but who can find a faithful man?*

The Scripture often joineth these two virtues together—mercy, or bounty, and truth. In this sentence is shewed that there are more that are liberal than that are sincere and faithful. ‘Many commend the man that is beneficial unto them.’ Indeed, some there are who, the more they owe to a man, the more they hate him; but as concerning the greatest number, they are wont to magnify those that bestow alms on them, or do them any good turn. ‘But who can find a faithful man?’ Among those things that are rare is a trusty and constant friend, who loveth in truth, and will stick by his neighbour in adversity; yea, such a man as hath a plain and sound heart, and will keep touch in word and deed, is scant to be found on the face of the earth. You shall not lightly hear many, or any, commend a man for his faithfulness. In all ages the number of faithful men hath been small, but now it is less than ever, and it will be less and less to the end of the world; for, saith our Saviour in the Gospel, When the Son of man doth come to judgment, do you think that he shall find faith on the earth? Luke xviii. 8.

Ver. 7. *The just man that walketh in his uprightness is blessed: and blessed shall his children be after him.*

The Lord, as it is in Exodus, sheweth mercy to thousands of those that love him and keep his commandments, Exod. xx. 6. The same doctrine is taught in this divine sentence: ‘The just man that walketh in his uprightness is blessed.’ The righteous person, who, without dissembling or changeableness, practiseth the will and commandments of the Lord, is happy in this world, and shall in the world to come be eternally blessed. ‘And blessed shall his children be after him.’ Moreover his posterity shall, for his sake, fare the better. Indeed, some

just men either have no children, or leave behind them such as be ungracious and unhappy. But when the Lord doth good to any of the seed of the faithful, he performeth that promise which here and elsewhere is made in the Scripture. Such are not the merits of godly parents as that their virtues deserve that God should shew favour to their offspring; but such is the mercy of God to the root and branches, that because the fathers are loved, their children and seed are also embraced and blessed, as may further appear by the places of Scripture which are quoted in the margin.

Ver. 8. *A king that sitteth on the throne of judgment chaseth away all evil with his eyes.*

The great use of magistrates and the duty of princes is herein declared. A most wise king affirmeth, that ‘a king who sitteth on the throne of judgment chaseth away all evil with his eyes.’ The duty of the prince is not to leave and commit all things to under-officers, and himself to do nothing, or only to govern by other men; no, the king must himself sit, not at feasts or vain assemblies, but on the throne of judgment. He must exercise judgment and do law himself, sitting personally on the tribunal-seat, and faithfully executing his office. By this means he chaseth away all evil with his eyes. Thus, by his presence and examining of matters, he findeth out and punisheth all sorts of offenders and misdemeanours; and as he punisheth and findeth out the evil subjects, so they will fly his presence and realm, or amend their manners. It is the duty of princes to correct, or put to death even, all the wicked, without exception or acception of persons, that the godly may live the more quietly and securely.

Ver. 9. *Who can say, I have cleansed mine heart, I am pure from my sins?*

We have all need of the grace of God to sanctify and save us, as is declared in this excellent instruction. For when the question is demanded, ‘Who can say, I have cleansed mine heart, I am pure from my sins?’ the meaning is, that no mortal man can truly affirm this of himself. Indeed, the prophet David saith in a certain psalm, ‘Surely I do purify mine heart in vain, and wash mine hands in cleanness’—that is, in innocency, Ps. lxxiii. 13. But he meaneth not that he did this by his own natural

power, but by God's Spirit; and not that he did attain to a perfect, but only to an imperfect pureness. It may be said of the elect, and they may say of themselves, that they are pure in heart and clean, after two sorts and by two means: first, By faith in Christ; and, secondly, By the renewing of the Spirit. But seeing the relics of natural corruption will remain in every man's soul until his dying day, do what he can; and seeing also there will be corruption in the flesh, and in all the parts of the body more or less, none can possibly say, 'I have cleansed mine heart, and am pure from my sin;' or if any say it, he shall be a liar. For the remnants of sin remain, like spots or stains in the spirit and flesh, even of those that are purged by the blood of Christ, and washed by the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, when the faithful shall be glorified, then they shall be without spot and wrinkle. In the mean season, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' Mat. v. 8.

Ver. 10. *Divers weights, and divers measures, are even both an abomination to the Lord.*

Concerning that injustice which is practised by false weights and balances, much before hath been spoken. Only here it shall be sufficient to observe, that certain tradesmen use to have some weights lesser, some greater; and so likewise some measures lesser, and some greater. With the greater weight and measure they buy, with the lesser they sell; or with the just weight and measure they sell to the wiser, with the unjust to the simpler, whom they may easily deceive. Both these; to wit, divers weights and divers measures, are such an abominable iniquity as the Lord will surely and sharply revenge.

Ver. 11. *Even a child will make known by his conversation whether he be pure, and whether his work be right.*

Neither young nor old can so lie hid, but that they will by one means or other, at one time or other, bewray what manner of persons they are, and what manner of deeds they do. If any may be unknown or not made manifest in both these respects, surely the little children are they who are not tried by such dealings or in so many matters as men are, and who may seem to do they know not what. Yet as here is taught, 'even a child will make himself

known by his conversation, or manifold actions,' that is to say, he will bewray by his behaviour, by his gestures, by his speeches, and by his practices, 'whether he be pure,' in what state he standeth before God, or whether he be regenerate and inwardly renewed by God's Spirit. 'And whether his works be right.' Whether also the thing he doth be just, equal, and agreeable to the word of God or no. Many works seem right, which yet are crooked, when they be done to an evil end, or proceed from the polluted fountain of an evil heart, chap. xxi. 4. Hence it is that these two words, pure and right, are joined together, both here and in the next chapter, where it is said that, As concerning the pure man, his work is straight or right. This to be the natural sense of this sentence I gather and find, after much consideration and searching, both by comparing the place before mentioned with this, and by examining the Hebrew text itself. Now truly so it is, that, as here is taught, even little children make known their disposition by the course of their dealings. For even as young plants declare, by their budding and growing, whether the root be sound and what fruit they bear, so little ones shew, by their actions and conversation, what their hearts are, and what their works be likewise. As we say in our common speech, that which pricks betimes will be a thorn, so those young imps that play lewd pranks are lewd persons, and will be, except they be changed by God's grace. On the contrary side, those little children that even in their tender age are delighted with the reading of God's word, and abstain from evil company, and complain of those that commit wickedness, and will not defile themselves with the corruptions of the world, testify and manifest by these signs that they fear God and are virtuously disposed. Such good children were Joseph, Samuel, Daniel, and Timothy, who even in their young age made it known that they were pure, and their work right.

Ver. 12. *The Lord hath made both these, even the ear which heareth, and the eye which seeth.*

The Lord in Exodus, chap. iv. 11, saith unto Moses, 'Who gave unto man his mouth? and who can make the dumb or the deaf, or him that can see or hear, or the blind? Is it not I, saith the Lord?' To the same effect speaketh Solomon in this sentence, for

when he saith, 'The Lord hath made both these, even the ear which heareth, and the eye which seeth,' his meaning is, that the Lord hath formed all the parts of men's bodies, and namely these two, the ear and the eye, and that he enableth and quickeneth both these to do their office. Now if the Lord made the ear, shall he not hear? and if he made the eye, shall he not see? Ps. xciv. 9. Yes, all things are manifest and naked before him with whom we have to do.

Ver. 13. *Love not sleep, lest thou come unto poverty: open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.*

We are called herein unto watchfulness and diligence in our callings. Now it is to be noted, that here sleep is not forbidden, but the love of sleep. To sleep is needful, to love sleep proceedeth from corruption of nature; and this affection of delighting in sleep causeth sleep to be longer than is meet, and therefore it bringeth many unto poverty. Now, whereas in the second part of this sentence opening of the eyes is opposed unto sleep, hereby watchfulness is meant, inasmuch as men watch with open eyes, as they sleep with their eyes shut. Unto watching, and so consequently early rising and the late sitting up about the despatching of the affairs of this life, and following of these callings whereunto we are appointed, plenty of all necessaries is promised.

Ver. 14. *It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone apart he boasteth.*

The manners of men are herein laid open, who seek to buy cheap and to sell dear. 'It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer.' Albeit the ware cheapened is well worth the money demanded by the seller, yet the covetous buyer, to the end he may get it very cheap, whilst he is in buying it, displayeth it to the utmost, and saith that it is not worth half so much as it is priced at, yea, that it is indeed stark naught. 'But when he is gone apart he boasteth.' But when he hath bought the thing, and is come home, then he will say to his friend, Had I not a good pennyworth? It is even worth twice as much as I paid for it. Again, on the other side, the seller saith, It is good, it is good, when he knoweth it to be stark naught. Thus both buyer and seller calleth that good which is evil, and that evil which is good, and speaketh against his own

conscience, so that sin cleaveth unto them both, and a woe hangeth over them for their lying and dissembling.

Ver. 15. *There is gold, and a multitude of precious stones: but the lips of knowledge are a most precious treasure.*

Worldly treasures are herein compared with words of truth and understanding. 'There is gold, and a multitude of precious stones.' There are in the world metals and stones of great price and value. 'But the lips of knowledge are a most precious treasure.' The words of truth and wisdom are a most excellent jewel; for as they be most acceptable to God, so they be most profitable to men. Wherefore let not any, for the wages of iniquity, pollute his conscience or speak an untruth, but let every one without fear of danger utter the truth, and labour after the gift of speaking wisely and graciously, so that he may minister edification to the hearers.

Ver. 16. *Take his garment that is surety for a strange man: and a pledge of him that is surety for a strange woman.*

The Lord saith to his people in Exodus, chap. xxii. 26, 'If thou shalt receive to pawn the garment of thy neighbour, restore it unto him before the sun goeth down: for that only is his covering, that is his garment to cover his skin; wherein should he lie? Otherwise it will come to pass, that when he shall cry unto me I will hear him; because I am merciful.' This statute was given concerning the poor needy person who made known his necessity, and was driven by borrowing to relieve himself. Albeit then, by the virtue of this law, such favour is to be shewed to him that maketh known his necessity, as that, when he borroweth anything, his garment is not to be kept from him, nor that pawn which he cannot well spare; yet it doth not follow that it is therefore unlawful to take his garment or pledge who is surety for strangers. For he dissembleth and taketh on him the person of a rich man, and he maketh not his necessity known, but boasteth so of his wealth and ability, as if he had not only wherewith to maintain himself, but to satisfy other men's debts. Wherefore, notwithstanding the former law, every one is willed in this sentence, without scruple of conscience and for his own safety, 'to take his garment who is surety for

a strange man, and a pledge of him who is surety for a strange woman.' See chap. xxii. 6. That is, not to trust such rash persons without a pawn, and to keep it if they forfeit the same. Truly it is a very fond part for a poor man to undertake to discharge another man's debt, which he is not able to pay. He deserveth well to smart for such folly. He that will not be wise for himself will not be wise for others.

Ver. 17. *The bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterward his mouth shall be filled with gravel.*

Sweet meat, as we are wont to say, will have sour sauce. 'The bread of deceit is sweet to a man.' Goods ill gotten are in the beginning very delightful to the crafty person; for that which is gotten either with small labour, or by cunning device, seemeth very pleasant. 'But afterward his mouth shall be filled with gravel.' In the end, the crafty person shall meet with many troubles; for either his conscience will upbraid him and check him, or vengeance will plague him for his deceit. The fears, sorrows, and cares which he shall have shall be, as it were, so many sharp stones to set his teeth on edge, and to vex him. Wherefore, instead of meat he shall feed on gravel, and instead of wheat, on pebble stones. Small pleasure is taken in the end in goods ill gotten, or livings unlawfully come by.

Ver. 18. *Establish thy thoughts by counsel; and by prudent advice make war.*

This sentence teacheth that those things which we go about to do are not rashly to be attempted, but to be done with meditation or counsel, which is to be required of the learned. 'Establish thy thoughts by counsel.' In all matters of doubt whatsoever, seek for and follow the direction and counsel of faithful and wise men; for so our thoughts, which are otherwise weak, are strengthened and brought unto effect. 'And by prudent advice make war.' But especially in matters of great weight, of which sort war is, wherein more is done by policy than strength, and wherein the life of many a man is hazarded, use thine own device, and take the advice of others who have skill and experience. Many eyes see more than one; wherefore consult with many. So doing, thy affairs shall have the better success, and thou shalt prevent many dangers, and escape sundry evils.

Ver. 19. *With him that going about as a talebearer discloseth a secret, and with him that flattereth with his lips, join not thyself.*

Albeit it is a good thing to take counsel, yet it is not safe, as here is shewed, for a man to communicate his affairs to all sorts of persons. If a secret be not kept, counsel is made frustrate. Wherefore join not thyself with him that, going about as a talebearer or backbiter, discloseth a secret; for this were to trust a traitor, and to acquaint an enemy with secrets. Again, 'With him that flattereth with his lips join not thyself.' Keep not company with those, nor take counsel of them, who will but fawn upon thee or gloze with thee, saying as thou sayest, or doing all things to please thee, not regarding their own duty or thy good. The word here used signifieth not only flatterers, but such as are given to blabbing, unto whom it is also a dangerous thing to communicate any secrets. In sum, we are all here warned to take heed of feigned friends, and such prattling gossips as are in all places.

Ver. 20. *He that curseth his father or his mother, shall have his candle put out in extreme darkness.*

The Lord enacteth in his law, that he that curseth his father or his mother shall die the death, Exod. xxi. 17. This sentence is a repetition and exposition or amplification of that statute. That child is said to curse his father or mother, who wisheth some evil unto them, or revileth them. Whereas it is said that his candle shall be put out, hereby is meant that his life and prosperity shall be taken away. This shall be done in obscure darkness, inasmuch as all his glory shall not only be taken away, but turned into extreme misery in a day of wrath and vengeance. See chap. xxx. 11.

Ver. 21. *An heritage is hastily gotten at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.*

Too much haste maketh waste, as in all matters, so in coming to promotions and possessions. 'An heritage is hastily gotten at the beginning.' An office in church or commonwealth, and a living or good bargain, is by craft or some sinister means quickly at the first attained. 'But the end thereof shall not be blessed.' The issue of it shall be unhappy; for goods ill gotten shall be consumed, and they that by unlawful means, without God's calling,

enter into places of government, shall find therein ill success, and many crosses.

Ver. 22. *Say not, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he will save thee.*

The Lord saith in his law, Lev. xix. 18, 'Revenge not, nor keep hatred against those that are of thy people, but love thy neighbour as thyself.' This precept is here repeated and enlarged. 'Say not, I will recompense evil.' Be so far off from revenging thyself indeed, as not so much as in words to threaten, or in thought to think of vengeance; for God hateth the bloody heart and bloody mouth, as well as the bloody hand. It is lawful to run to the magistrate for justice, but private persons may not wreak their own anger upon those with whom they are offended. As revenge is forbidden, so patience is commanded. 'But wait on the Lord.' The judges of this world cannot revenge all wrongs, neither will oftentimes do right. Wherefore very wisely Solomon biddeth those that are wronged to repair to the Lord, and not to the magistrate, though he also permitteth so to do. To wait on the Lord is to commend the cause we have in hand unto him, and to stay his leisure till he deliver us. A promise is made unto all those that patiently expect the Lord's help and deliverance, that he will save them. It is to be observed that it is not said, Wait on the Lord and he will revenge thee, but, He will save thee. By this kind of speech the Holy Ghost would warn every one that is injured not to think of the revenge or hurt of his adversary, but of his own defence and salvation. Thus if he do he shall both be preserved himself, and see his adversary revenged, albeit not according to his wrathful desire, yet in such sort as shall seem good to the divine justice and equity.

Ver. 23. *Divers weights are abomination to the Lord: and false balances are not good.*

This sentence having been largely handled before in this book, chap. xi. 1, it were needless here to repeat that which already hath been written thereof.

Ver. 24. *A man's steps are of the Lord; and what doth a man understand of his way?*

In God we live, we move, and have our being. 'A man's steps are of the Lord.' The goings out and comings in of a man, yea, all his moving and

stirring, is not of his own strength, but of the power of the Almighty. 'And what doth a man understand of his way?' As there is weakness in the body without the Lord, so without him there is nothing but ignorance in the mind. For when any goeth a journey, what doth he know which way he shall go or return, or how his matters will fall out? God can lead him another way than he purposed to take, or can take him away in the midst of the path whereinto he is entered. Wherefore let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor the wise man in his wisdom, but let every one rejoice in the Lord, without whom we can do nothing, no, not in the matters of this life, much less in those things that are spiritual.

Ver. 25. *It is a destruction to a man to devour that which is holy: and after vows (made) to call back.*

Sacrilege and profaneness are herein condemned. It is a dangerous thing to dally or to be unreverent in God's matters. By the law of God sacrifices, tithes, and oblations were things holy and consecrated to God. Then that which is holy was devoured among the Jews, when any of these things, or suchlike, were taken away by force or craft. Wherefore the sons of Eli, who pulled to themselves the sacrifices of the people of Israel, even before they were offered, did devour or swallow up that which was holy, 1 Sam. ii. 13, 14. In these days a holy thing is devoured when the Lord, or the church, or the poor are defrauded of that which hath been given to holy uses. To pull from the church after this sort is a destruction to a man. It is not only a sin, but such a wickedness as will draw upon a man some grievous plague and judgment, whereby he shall utterly be overthrown. Again, 'It is a destruction after vows made to call back.' That is, either to wish a vow unmade, or to withhold the thing which in heart hath been vowed, or in speech promised to God's worship or service. This God forbiddeth in his law where he saith, 'If thou hast vowed a vow unto the Lord thy God, defer not to pay it: for the Lord thy God would require it of thee; and it would be a sin in thee. But if thou abstainest from vowing, it shall not be a sin,' Deut. xxiii. 21. Wherefore let us duly perform those vows which we make to the Lord, lest we cause ourselves so to sin by rash vows, that the Lord shall vow us unto destruction.

Ver. 26. *A wise king scattereth the wicked, and turneth the wheel over them.*

A prudent governor is herein resembled unto a skilful husbandman, or thresher of corn. The husbandman first winnoweth or fanneth the corn, to the end the chaff may be severed from the pure grain: even so 'a wise king scattereth the wicked.' He breaketh the conventicles of heretics, thieves, adulterers, and suchlike evil-doers, yea, he driveth them, through his severity, out of the country. 'And he turneth the wheel over them.' Again, as the husbandman thresheth the hard corn with a cart wheel, so the prudent ruler inflicteth sharp punishments upon the ugodly. That it was the custom of husbandmen among the Jews to thresh the hard corn with a cart wheel, may be gathered out of that place of the prophecy of Isaiah, where, resembling the Lord's chastening of his children to that course which the thresher taketh in dealing with his corn, he saith, 'For fitches are not threshed with an iron instrument, neither shall a cart wheel be turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and cummin with a rod,' Isa. xxviii. 27, 28. By which comparison the prophet declareth that the weak servants of God are not chastened by the Lord with so great afflictions as are the stronger.

Ver. 27. *Man's soul is, as it were, the candle of the Lord (whereby) he searcheth all the bowels of the belly.*

The excellent gift of reason bestowed on mankind is herein commended. 'Man's soul is, as it were, the candle of the Lord.' The mind of man is not brutish, as is the heart of beasts, but so illightened with understanding as that it may fitly be called the lamp of the Eternal. '(Whereby) he searcheth all the bowels of the belly.' A man by this spirit of his, indued with reason, seeketh out and pierceth into the nature of all things which are most obscure, neither only knoweth his own estate, but fisheth out the secrets of others with whom he hath to do.

Ver. 28. *Bounty and truth preserve the king: and by bounty he upholdeth his throne.*

Virtue is that whereby the crown is especially maintained. 'Bounty,' that virtue which consisteth not only in pardoning of offences, but in giving of alms or gifts freely to those who stand in need, 'and

truth,' and that virtue also which giveth every one his due, as, namely, honour to the good, and punishment to the wicked, 'preserve the king;' are the bucklers or bulwarks whereby the royal person of the prince is defended from evils. 'And by bounty he upholdeth his throne.' Nevertheless, howsoever both these virtues are indeed so necessary as that, if either both of them, or but one of them, be wanting, the prince cannot possibly remain long in safety; yet bounty is the chief pillar of the state or kingdom; for whenas strangers are nourished, the poor relieved, the fatherless defended, schools erected, the preachers of the word maintained, to conclude all, the works of mercy practised, this is that which winneth the hearts of the subjects, in whose goodwill the strength of a land doth especially consist; as, on the contrary side, nothing so soon overthroweth the throne of a prince as the ill-will or hatred of the people under him.

Ver. 29. *The glory of young men is their strength: the honour of the aged is the gray head.*

This sentence insinuateth that both the young and the old have their several ornaments wherein they may rejoice, and for the which also they are to be revered. 'The glory of young men is their strength.' Albeit, they that are of tender or green years want oftentimes wisdom or experience, which commonly are to be found in the ancient; yet have they courage of mind and strength of body, whereby they are enabled to follow their callings, to fight for their countries, to do acts of great fame and renown. No man, then, is to despise the younger for their green years, but rather even in this respect to esteem them the more. Now, on the other side, 'The honour of the aged is the gray head.' Albeit also they who are stricken in years are weak in body, or want the use of their senses; yet the silver crown of hoary hairs, which the finger of God hath set upon their head, doth make them venerable in all places where they come, so that they carry an authority or majesty with them, as it were. Hence it is that in the law the Lord giveth this commandment especially to the younger sort, directing his precept to every one of them in particular, as it were, 'Rise up before the hoary head, and honour the person of the aged man,' Le. xix. Were this commandment of the Lord so practised in these times as it ought to be,

there would not be so great sauciness or malapertness in youth as usually appeareth everywhere.

Ver. 30. *Blueness and wounds serve to purge (or are a purging for) the wicked man: and strokes that pierce into the bowels of the belly.*

This instruction teacheth us how needful a thing it is for the ungodly to be scourged and punished for their offences. 'Blueness and wounds serve to purge the wicked man.' Even as beating (which blueness followeth) and lancing (which leaveth a wound behind) is fit and profitable for diseased and naughty jades; so sharp punishments and cutting corrections in the flesh and in the skin are meet for evil-doers, and for those who otherwise will not be reformed. 'And strokes that pierce into the bowels of the belly.' Yea, moreover, as goads or spurs are requisite and necessary for stubborn and stiff-necked beasts, who will not stir unless they be touched and pricked to the quick; so most grievous and inward plagues and troubles, piercing the bones and entering to the heart, are needful for obstinate and heinous offenders. True it is, albeit an unrepentant wicked man be never so much corrected or sharply dealt with, yet his corruption will not quite be tamed or wholly purged out; but yet, nevertheless, punishment for the time somewhat restraineth the most ungodly wretch in the world. Now, as for those penitent sinners who have done amiss through ignorance or infirmity, the scourges or punishments which they sustain for their wicked offences not only scour out of them many vices to which before they were given, but work in them many good virtues; so, then, not only afflictions for righteousness' sake, but corrections for sin, are profitable for God's children, inasmuch as they are by these purged from much dross, like as by the other they are declared to have in them much fine silver, as it were.

## CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1. *The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he listeth.*

The rule of princes is over their subjects, but the rule of the Lord is over princes. Not only the hand but the heart of the king is directed and moved by

the divine providence. The rivers of water are carried sometimes one way, sometimes another; even so the prince's mind is inclined by the Lord, sometimes to one affection, sometimes to another, and that without resistance. If princes' hearts be in God's hands, then private men's much more. If kings stand so affected as God inclineth them, subjects have need to pray that God would govern them by his Holy Spirit. Finally, if all rulers' hearts be in the Lord's disposition, all rulers have need to call upon the Lord for themselves, that he would assist and aid them in their high callings with his grace from above.

Ver. 2. *A man seemeth straight to himself in all his ways: but the Lord pondereth their hearts.*

God's judgment is more piercing and more perfect than man's. 'A man seemeth straight to himself in all his ways.' Some man dealeth so uprightly as that his conscience doth not condemn him, but rather justify him in all that he hath done; yet he is not therefore justified, for God pondereth the hearts, that is, examineth the souls and spirits, and findeth them corrupt or faulty in divers points.

Ver. 3. *To do justice and judgment is a thing more acceptable to God than sacrifice.*

Holiness without righteousness is mere hypocrisy, and a plain mockery of God, which therefore cannot please him. To do justice and judgment is to practise the works of obedience and charity prescribed in the law of the Lord, from a sincere conscience and faith unfeigned. These, as our Saviour witnesseth in the Gospel, are the great commandments, and, as the scribe that was not far from God's kingdom therein affirmeth, are more excellent than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices; for sacrifices without these are abomination, and with these are but in a lower degree accepted, Mark xii. 33, being by these made savoury, even as meat is seasoned with salt, Mark ix. 49. Wherefore let every one not so much labour to perform the outward ceremonies of God's worships, as to practise the duties of obedience toward the Lord, and of love toward his neighbour.

Ver. 4. *He that is of haughty looks (is also) of a proud heart: the ploughing of the wicked is sin.*

In the former part of this sentence is affirmed that he who outwardly sheweth himself stately, is in-

<sup>1</sup> See a fuller declaration of this matter before, chap. xvi. 2.

wardly puffed up in his mind with an opinion of his own excellency. Hence it is that in the Scripture eyes lifted up, and a high or swelling mind are often joined together, and so attributed to one and the same person, as that, by the judgment of the Holy Ghost, it may appear that he which hath the one cannot be without the other. David, in a certain psalm, speaking of the choice which he would make of his servants, saith, 'Him that is of haughty looks, and of a proud heart, I cannot bear.' Ps. ci. 5. And in another, going about to clear himself of the crime of ambition laid to his charge, he uttereth these words: 'O Lord, I am not high-minded, I have no haughty eye,' Ps. cxxxii. 1. I am not ignorant that some join the former part of this sentence unto the latter to this effect, as if that in the whole were taught that the outward and inward pride of the ungodly, and all that the wicked do or plough, were sin. But we are not to think that Solomon would labour to light, as it were, a candle at noonday, or deliver a parable which had in it no deep meaning. Finally, the words in the text do as well bear the translation set down as that which others deliver. In the latter part of this sentence, the working of mischief, whereunto the wicked give themselves, is by a borrowed speech called ploughing. The reason hereof is, for that as the husbandman taketh great pain in tilling of the ground, and sweateth at the plough, so the ungodly man followeth the accomplishing of mischief with earnestness. For this kind of ploughing the prophet Hosea reproveth the Israelites, saying, 'Ye have ploughed wickedness, and reaped iniquity; and ye have eaten the fruit of lying,' Hosea xi. 13. Such ploughing is no light transgression, but a sin, that is to say, a great and grievous abomination.

Ver. 5. *The troubles of the diligent man (further) continually to increase; but the hasty man's continually to lose.*

Herein is taught that labour enricheth, and that haste, as we are wont to say, maketh waste. 'The thoughts of the diligent man further continually to increase.' The provident care which the painful person taketh to find out the best ways, or to take the fittest opportunities of thriving, doth by little and little from time to time mend and advantage his estate; for wit and labour are two notable means of getting goods, and augmenting of a man's portion.

'But the hasty man's continually to lose.' On the other side, the wily craft of such a one as maketh more speed than is meet to rise up unto wealth, impairerth from time to time his stocks and substances; for craft meeteth commonly with crosses and curses, which stop and overthrow the courses thereof.

Ver. 6. *Treasures gathered by a deceitful tongue are vanity, tossed to and fro of those that seek death.*

In the sentence going before, painful diligence hath been commended as a direct and lawful means of attaining unto wealth. In this, falsehood is not only condemned, but threatened; whereby, howsoever some come unto store of worldly goods, yet in the end they prosper not, but perish together with their wealth. Treasures gathered by a deceitful tongue are called vanity, because they vanish within a short time, being scattered by God's judgment, as the dust is by the wind. Now, for that the gatherers of such treasures perish together with them, and by them draw upon themselves both temporal judgments and eternal condemnation, therefore they are called the vanity of men that seek death. Wherefore let every one take heed how he getteth goods by evil means; for the gold and silver, or whatsoever it is which he hath gotten unjustly, will cry to the Lord for vengeance, and prove his bane in the end.

Ver. 7. *The destruction (or destroyer) of the wicked shall cut them in sunder, because they refuse to practise righteousness.*

Behold both the severity and the equity of God's judgments upon the ungodly. The angel, or instrument of destruction whatsoever which the Lord sendeth to revenge the evil-doers, shall cut them in sunder; that is to say, put thee to such extreme torment as may be made by the sawing in sunder of a man's body with an instrument of iron. An example of this severity we have in Agag, whom Samuel the prophet cut in pieces before the Lord at Gilgal, saying unto him, 'As thy sword hath bereaved women of their children, so thy mother shall, among other women, be bereft of her child,' 1 Sam. xv. 33. Darius, as appeareth in the prophecy of Daniel, chap. iii. 29, enacted this kind of punishment, to wit, of cutting in sunder or quartering, against all those that should blaspheme the true God. Our



Saviour in the Gospel threateneth the same torment to those evil servants whom, when he shall come, he shall find beating their fellow-servants, and eating and drinking with drunkards. Sharp are the judgments of the Lord on the wicked, but withal most just, Luke xii. 46, as is taught in the latter part of this sentence. For 'they refuse to practise righteousness; that is to say, they sin not of frailty, but willingly and wittingly renounce mercy and equity, and choose rather unto themselves unjust dealing and cruelty.

Ver. 8. *There is a way of a man perverse and strange: but as for the pure man, his work is straight.*

Some are always wavering-minded, and, as the apostle James speaketh, men of a double heart, and unconstant in all their ways, James i. 8; alluding in these his words to the description of an unregenerate person set down in this place. For here it is said that 'there is a way of a man perverse and strange, or unconstant and strange.' That the course of the unregenerate is changeable it may appear herein, that sometimes they follow one sect, sometimes another; and that sometimes they do that which in itself is good, and within a while return to folly. That their course is also strange is manifest hereby, in that naturally, commonly, and most willingly they embrace darkness rather than the light. This is not to be marvelled at, seeing they are corrupt even from the birth, and seeing a man cannot gather grapes on thorns, or figs on thistles. 'But as for the pure man, his work is straight.' There is no man perfectly pure; but he whose sins are purged by Christ, and whose conscience is washed from unbelief and unholiness by the water of God's Spirit, is in the Scripture said to be pure, because he is purified in some part. The conversation of such a one is straight; that is, upright, constant, agreeable to God's will, and referred to God's glory, not deceitful, nor variable, nor crooked, nor, in one word, unreformed.

Ver. 9. *It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a contentious woman in a wide house.*

It is not wisdom for house or land to match with such a one, as with whom to dwell under the same roof, or to keep in the same roof, is a thing uncomfortable and inconvenient. The houses of the Jews were not made shelving, or aslope above, as our

buildings are, but so broad and open that any might walk on the tops thereof. Now it would be a very inconvenient abiding for a man to dwell in such an open place, subject to wind and weather, as were the tops of the houses of the Jews. But not only to dwell in the house-top, but to be thrust into a corner thereof, or to sit continually moping upon the battlement of the same, were yet more inconvenient; for how can a man stir him when he is pent within a narrow room? or how can he sit at ease in a dangerous or troublesome place? Nevertheless, to dwell with a contentious wife is yet a harder estate than this; for she with her continual brawling will disquiet her husband's mind, and greatly hinder him in his calling. And although it is in itself a thing more comfortable to keep in rooms that are large, covered, and full of company, than on a house-top that is uncovered, narrow, and solitary; yet it is, in this respect, better to remain in an inconvenient than in a convenient place, that the inconvenient place is free from strife and contention, but the convenient containeth such a troublesome person, as by her bitterness marreth all the sweetness that is therein. Nevertheless, howsoever the Holy Ghost, both here and elsewhere in this book, speaketh sharply against the contentious woman, yet he doth not this to deface the weaker sex, or to blame all women, but to warn both women and men, both one and another, to take heed of the vice of contention, and of disturbing those places and societies wherein they live.

Ver. 10. *The soul of the wicked man desireth evil: his neighbour hath no favour in his eyes.*

In the former part of this sentence the unregenerate are noted out by this property, that the lusts of the flesh do reign in them. 'The soul of the wicked man desireth evil.' The inward affection of the unregenerate person longeth to enjoy something that is unlawful, or to do something that is hurtful. 'His neighbour hath no favour in his eyes.' His nearest and dearest friend is neither pitied nor helped by him. For such as is his soul, such also is his eye; yea, and his hand, and every part of his body, even merciless and cruel.

Ver. 11. *When the scorner is punished, he that is simple waxeth wise: and when a wise man is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.*

Punishments by stripes, and admonitions by words, are two wholesome means of bettering those in whom there is any grace. 'When the scorner is punished,' when the obstinate breaker and despiser of God's law or man's law is chastened or put to death according to his desert, 'he that is simple waxeth wise.' Such a one as sinneth of ignorance or frailty becometh more wary and obedient. 'And when a wise man is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.' Moreover, when a prudent person is only by words reprov'd or admonish'd, he groweth in spiritual understanding and obedience; for one word more entereth into a wise man, than a hundred stripes do into a fool.

Ver. 12. *He that overthroweth the wicked for their evil, instructeth the just man by the house of the wicked man.*

We have heard by what means both a wise man and a simple man hath been bettered, let us now herein observe whereby a righteous man is instructed. 'He that overthroweth the wicked for their evil,' or that throweth them into evil, that is to say, whosoever destroyeth and revengeth sinners for their horrible transgressions, whether it be the Lord, or any angel, or any magistrate, 'he instructeth the just man by the house of the wicked man,' he profiteth the innocent person by the punishments which he inflicteth on the transgressor. For as it is in the psalm, when the righteous seeth the vengeance that falleth on the sinner, 'He shall rejoice and say, Doubtless there is a reward for the just: doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth,' Ps. lviii. 10, 11. If we shall peruse the examples of the Scripture,<sup>1</sup> we shall find, that as the just have always instructed the families of the wicked, in which sense some take this parable, before God's judgments have fallen upon them; so they have by their ruin received instruction unto themselves, after that they saw the plagues of the Lord to light on them and their habitations.

Ver. 13. *He that stoppeth his ears at the crying of the poor, shall himself cry, and not be heard.*

In the former part of this sentence the sin of hardness of heart toward the poor is described; in the latter, the punishment thereunto due is threat-

ened. The fault of the merciless man is noted out in two points: the one, that he stoppeth his ear; the other, that he regardeth not the crying of the poor. He stoppeth his ear, that either will not hear when he doth hear, or will not help when he can help. He regardeth not the crying of the poor, who is not moved by his loud voice or by his weeping; for crying noteth out a clamour, and is a sign of lamentable misery. The request of the poor man is to be heard, much more the cry of the poor afflicted beggar, I say not of the stout and idle vagabond. He that will not hear the cry of the poor man shall cry himself; for he shall fall into some bitter affliction, which shall cause him to roar for grief of heart. But he shall not be heard, for God will behave himself toward him as a deaf man that cannot hear, neither delivering him out of evils, nor granting him any good things. The merciless man shall cry as Dives did, but shall not receive a drop of comfort.

Ver. 14. *A gift in secret turneth away anger; and a present in the bosom vehement wrath.*

The force of gifts is by degrees described in this sentence. See chap. xvii. 18, and xviii. 16. A gift in itself is gracious, but if it be secretly given, it is yet more acceptable; for privy bestowing taketh away the blushing of open receiving. Whenas then a present shall even so closely be convey'd unto the receiver, as that it shall covertly be put into his custom, then it will be most welcome and even forcible, as is taught in the latter part of this sentence, to pacify vehement wrath. For it will conquer the heart, and heap coals of fire even unto the head of him who beareth ill-will, chap. xxv. 22.

Ver. 15. *The executing of judgment is a joy to the righteous: but a terror to the workers of iniquity.*

As before in this book hath been taught, that the way of the Lord is a strengthening to the just, but a terror to the workers of iniquity, chap. x. 26; so here is declared that the upright government of the godly magistrate is a joy to the one, and a discomfort to the other. The magistrate is the officer of the Lord, appointed for the praise of the good and the punishment of the evil-doer, as the apostle teacheth. Hence it is that the executing of judgment is a joy to the righteous. For the just, seeing that right is done to every one, and that a reward is

<sup>1</sup> See examples, Job v. 3; Ps. xxxvii. 36, and in divers other places of Scriptures.

given unto them, cannot but herein exceedingly rejoice. Hence it is again that the evil-doers quake and tremble; for they, perceiving the magistrate to be bent to punish sin, conceive great fear that they for their misdeeds shall be revenged.

Ver. 16. *The man that strayeth from the way of wisdom shall rest in the congregation of the dead.*

The law of God is the way of wisdom, and that narrow path which leadeth to eternal life. He is said to wander from this straight way, who walketh not after the Spirit but after the flesh. Such a one shall, in the end of his error, 'rest in the congregation of the dead.' For being shut out of God's kingdom, he shall in this world have his portion among those wretches whom divine vengeance for sin pursueth, or be tormented for ever in the restless resting-place of hell-fire, together with the devil and his angels.

Ver. 17. *He that loveth pastime shall be a poor man, and he that loveth wine and ointments shall not be rich.*

Two sorts of men are in the highway to beggary, to wit, unthrifths and spendthrifths. He is an unthrifft that loveth pastime; that is to say, who cannot moderate himself in the use of recreations, but delighting in play above measure, spendeth his time therein. Such a one must needs be poor, because he doth not work to get anything, but always play. He is a spendthrift that loveth wine and loveth ointments; that is, who in dainty cheer and costly delights keepeth no measure, and taketh his pleasure to the full. Such an epicure cannot be rich, because he not only spendeth much time, but great costs, upon superfluous delicacies. It is not unlawful to use sweet or precious delights, but to over-use them.

Ver. 18. *The wicked man shall be a ransom for the just man, and the unfaithful man for the upright.*

Some are accursed and detestable wretches, whose desert and destiny it is to die for the sins of the people, and by whose death the plague that is in any town or country is turned away and ceaseth. These are shewed here to be the sacrifices which must be offered unto the Lord in the time of any common or extraordinary vengeance, to the end that sin being purged as it were by sinful blood, and the innocent redeemed by the guilty head, his fierce wrath may be appeased. 'The wicked man shall be a ransom for the just man.' In the time of some strange

visitation for sin, the notorious offender, who is guilty of heinous crimes, by his suffering and death shall free the innocent person from the stroke of God's vengeance, who should not be spared but plagued, if the evil-doer were winked at. 'And the unfaithful man for the upright.' Moreover, some one that hath, by breaking the Lord's covenant or precept, caused trouble to fall both on himself and many others who in like manner have not sinned as he hath done, shall, suffering alone for the sin which he hath committed, deliver by his misery the rest that are in the same adversity, but not for the same cause. The executing of Saul's sons, 2 Sam. xxi., the stoning of Achan, Joshua vii. 20, and casting of Jonah into the sea, Jonah i. 12, may more plainly declare and more fully prove the truth of this matter. It may here be objected, if the Lord punish the just for the wicked man's offence, how is he then righteous? To answer hereunto briefly: first, Though the Lord afflict the innocent with the sinners oftentimes, yet he doth not correct them for the faults of transgressors, but for their own faults, there being none so just but that he sinneth sometimes. Secondly, When the just, having authority to punish sin, wink at the known offences of the ungodly, by letting them go scot-free, they make their transgressions their own, so that in such cases no marvel if the Lord scourge the just with the unjust; for even the just do appertain in such cases to the family of the unjust, as one<sup>1</sup> gathereth very well out of the Scripture. Last of all, The troubles of this life are only trials of the godly sometimes and not chastisements; so that, if they be now and then enwrapped in the same adversities with the ungodly, this is not to be wondered at, neither is the Lord for this cause to be accused.

Ver. 19. *It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman.*

The desert is a very uncommodious and uncomfortable place to dwell in. For therein good things are wanting, and evils abounding. The Israelites found this to be true by their experience, who in the desert not only wanted food and drink, but were stung with serpents. Nevertheless, it is more tolerable to abide in the wilderness among venomous creatures and wild beasts, than to dwell in never

<sup>1</sup> Tre. Annot. Lev. xx. 5.

so fair or plentiful a house with a brawling and unquiet woman. For she by her words and dealings will more trouble and provoke a man to grief than any bear or serpent.

Ver. 20. *In the house of the wise man is a precious treasure and ointment: but a foolish man devoureth it.*

The provident person gathereth, the fool scattereth. 'In the house of the wise man is a precious treasure and ointment.' In the habitation of the provident householder there is laid up store of all things which are necessary or pleasant; for whatsoever is of any profitable use, it is comprehended under the name of a precious treasure. Again, whatsoever serveth unto delight is contained under the word ointment, it being then the custom of the Jews to refresh and honour the bodies of men by anointing the same. 'But the foolish man devoureth or scattereth it.' That is to say, the unthrifty person by his prodigality lavishing out his great substance and the patrimony left him by his parents or friends, becometh bankrupt. Now truly this is a great vanity and vexation of spirit, that a fool shall spend that in a few days or months which hath been long in getting, and hath been attained with great painstaking.

Ver. 21. *He that followeth after righteousness and bounty, shall find life, righteousness, and glory.*

Godliness hath the promises both of this life and of the life to come, as is shewed in this sentence. This is the property of a godly man, that 'he followeth after righteousness and bounty, or kindness;' that is to say, he doth not slackly seek after, but ensue with earnestness, those two virtues, which are most excellent, and under which all others are contained. The former of these is righteousness, which is that virtue whereby that which is due is performed; the latter is bounty, which is that virtue whereby good is done of a merciful and kind affection. He that thus seeketh these two virtues shall find three jewels and singular rewards. The first of these is life, that is, length of days in this world, and immortality in the world to come. The second is righteousness, that is, such a just measure from the Lord and men as he hath observed in his dealings. The last is glory, that is to say, honour both in heaven and earth before the Almighty and among the

faithful. Thus shall the man be blessed that walketh in uprightness.

Ver. 22. *The wise man goeth up into the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.*

This instruction declareth that wisdom can do much even in war, yea, more than strength, which yet therein is commonly most respected. 'A wise man goeth up into the city of the mighty,' one prudent person by his policy scaleth the walls wherein are many valiant men, 'and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof;' moreover, he throweth down by his device and counsel the bulwarks and castles of the same. Wherefore wisdom is better than strength, and a prudent person is to be preferred before one that is valiant.

Ver. 23. *He that keepeth his mouth and his tongue preserveth his soul from afflictions.*

Experience witnesseth that he which hath no care how to govern his gestures or speech, incurreth many troubles, as distress of mind, suits of law and wounds, from which he is free who guideth the same aright. Mention is made both of the mouth and tongue, to shew that watch and ward is to be kept both over our speech and all the instruments thereof. Not so much as the mouth is rashly to be opened, nor the countenance to be cast awry, much less then should the tongue be unbridled, and utter slanders or revilings. Now as he that keepeth his doors fast barred and locked preserveth his life from danger, so he that refraineth his tongue and setteth a watch before his lips, preserveth his soul from distress and destruction.

Ver. 24. *Proud, stubborn, scornful is his name, who in his fury worketh pride.*

Herein is declared whereby an ill name is easily gotten, than which there cannot be almost a greater evil. It is gotten especially by working pride in wrath, that is to say, by doing in the time of rage some presumptuous action. Many being angry because their commandments are not obeyed or their desires fulfilled, to make their power known persecute such as resist them, or attempt high matters in the pride of their heart. So did Lamech, when he boasted that he would slay a man in his wound; Dathan and Abiram, when they rose up against Moses; Nebuchadnezzar, when he cast the three

children into the fiery furnace; and Herod, when he slew the little infants; as also Pharaoh, when he pursued the Israelites whom he had suffered to depart out of his land. The name of such a one as thus in his fury worketh pride, is proud, stubborn, and scornful, that is to say, he is publicly infamous, and noted with many titles of reproach. The first spot of infamy that is cast on him is, that he is a proud man, that is to say, one that is vainglorious. The second, that he is stubborn, that is, stout, full of stomach, and very wilful. The third is, that he is scornful, that is, a contemner and derider of all others besides himself, and indeed a very wicked and pestilent man. Thus the arrogant person who of all others most desireth fame and renown, by his furious behaviour and insolent dealing becometh of all men most infamous.

Ver. 25. *The desire of the slothful man slayeth him, because his hands refuse to work.*

Ver. 26. *All the day long he coveteth greedily: but the righteous man giveth and spareth not.*

Herein the slothful person, who is always unrighteous, inasmuch as he neglecteth his duty and calling, is in divers points compared with the just man, who followeth his vocation faithfully. First, as concerning the negligent sluggard, His desire slayeth him; that is to say, hunger, which is a most greedy wolf, killeth him in the end. The want of the things he desireth causeth not only his mind to faint, but his body to pine away. Thus wishers and woulders are neither good householders, nor yet long livers. Secondly, The cause why the slothful man cometh to misery and destruction is for that his hands refuse to work at all. The feet of sluggards do oftentimes stir enough, as may appear in those idle people and vagabonds, who, though they do nothing, yet go about from house to house, either telling of tales or asking of alms. But as for their hands, which are made to be instruments of working, they are in their bosoms, or hanging down at rest; for they cannot nor will either plough or dig, or occupy themselves in any painful trade or gainful work. Thus idleness is bred in the bones, and will not out of the flesh of the sluggard. Hence also it cometh to pass that, as is taught in the third place, He coveteth greedily or exceedingly all the day long; that is to say, he vehemently lusteth after other

men's goods from time to time, living both uncomfortably to himself and unprofitably to others. On the contrary side, as is affirmed in the latter part of the six and twentieth verse, 'The righteous man giveth and spareth not.' Every one that laboureth diligently in his calling doth not distribute to the poor, but many a drudge of the world hoardeth up goods, doing no good therewith to the needy, defrauding his own soul thereof. But the just man, who is both painful and merciful, not only hath sufficient for himself, but ministereth unto the necessities of others, by reason that, as his heart is pitiful, so his hands are given to working. Thus he liveth by his labour, yea, thereby he nourisheth those that are in want. Neither is he thus liberal for a day, or month, or once, as the manner of some is, in the year, but all day long, and that without any sparing and niggardliness. Who would not now rather be a labourer than a loiterer, seeing the sluggard is so miserable a wretch, but the just man so happy, and able to do good works?

Ver. 27. *The sacrifice of the wicked man is an abomination: how much more, when he offereth it wickedly?*

This sentence teacheth that the exercises of religion please not God of themselves, but are acceptable or abominable in his sight according to the persons that perform them, and the manner of performing the same. 'The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord.' The gift and service of the ungodly displeaseth the Lord very much, because the person who offereth or performeth the same is unclean and unregenerate; for as the foul vessel polluteth precious liquor, so the filthy soul of the offerer defileth his offering. Wherefore they are deceived who, wallowing in some vice, with repentance whereof they are not touched, imagine that they can pacify the Lord's wrath by the exercises of godliness which they perform. But if the sacrifice of the wicked be of itself an abomination to the Lord, how much more then is it abominable when it is performed wickedly? For then it is twice odious and detestable—once for the sin of the person, and again for the corruption of the action. Wherefore, if any man do those things which the Lord hath prescribed, but perform them not in that manner to that end, or with that affection which he requireth, not only all his labour and cost is lost, but

turned into sin, and into matter of provoking the Lord into fierce displeasure. For the Lord will be served not after the will of men, but after his own will, and the rule set down in his holy word.

*Ver. 28. He that witnesseth lies, shall perish: but the man that heareth shall speak for ever.*

That vain person who testifieth the things which never he heard, or saw, or knew to be done, witnesseth lies; for lies are untruths, and devised only by the brain of some deceitful person or other. Such a one as thus witnesseth lies shall perish; for being tripped in his speech, or punished by the magistrate, or the Lord himself, he shall be put to silence with shame, or cut off from the earth, so that he shall not live, or at the least tell lies any long time. 'But the man that heareth shall speak for ever.' For he that testifieth no other thing, save that which he knoweth to be true, shall both continue in life, and in liberty of speaking. Indeed, he that goeth by hearsay, as the proverb is, shall tell many lies, as well as truths. But he that witnesseth of a man that which he hath heard him speak, and not that which he hath heard others speak of him, shall neither deceive nor be deceived. For in these cases the hearing of the ear is as certain a matter as the sight of the eye. Let us learn by that doctrine which here is set down, always to witness, not those things which we never knew, or which only have been reported unto us by flying fame, but those things which we have learned by some of ourselves, in such sort as that we have either heard or seen them, or else even felt them with our hands. So doing, we shall be bold and able in all times and places, before any to stand and avouch that which we say.

*Ver. 29. The wicked man hardeneth his face: but he that is upright ordereth each of his ways aright.*

Great difference there is between those that are of a crooked nature, and those that are of an honest disposition. 'The wicked man hardeneth his face.' The ungodly person goeth on in his sins without shame or returning back. The seat of blushing is in the face, so that, whereas here it is said of the wicked man that he hardeneth his face, it must be understood that he excuseth his sin, or proceedeth therein without blushing. He is like a harlot, that hath a forehead of brass, or a traveller that setteth his face against the wind and weather, and goeth on

forward in his journey; for let the wicked man be warned or threatened never so much, he still proceedeth on in his iniquity. 'But he that is upright ordereth each of his ways aright.' For the just man walketh warily and soberly in this world, and taketh care that neither he err in any of his opinions, nor swerve from the law of the Lord in any of his actions. Wherefore also, if he be reprov'd or admonished for anything which is noted to be amiss in him, he resisteth not, but amendeth his fault, and as much as in him lieth frameth himself in the whole course of his life unto the obedience of the Lord's commandments.

*Ver. 30. There is no wisdom, and no understanding, and no counsel against the Lord.*

Herein is shewed that all the policies or subtleties whatsoever, which either are in the wit, or may spring from the device of creatures indued with reason, whether of men or angels, are utterly unable to resist and to hinder the decree and will of the Creator. For it is affirmed that 'there is no wisdom, and no understanding, and no counsel against the Lord.' By wisdom in this place a certain deep and general knowledge of many matters is meant. By understanding, a politic disposing or ordering of particular affairs or courses is understood. By counsel, prudent advice given, arising from scanning and debating of cases, is insinuated. None of all these three, nor any subtleties of the creatures whatsoever, can overthrow the purpose of God, prevail against his truth, or hinder his majesty from doing what he will. For the Lord's infinite wisdom is able to overreach and prevent the wisdom of the creatures, which is contained within certain bounds and limits.

*Ver. 31. The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but salvation itself is of the Lord.*

As before hath been shewed that no policy prevaileth against the Lord, so here is declared that no power can do anything without the Lord. The root of the former part of this sentence is to be found in one of the Psalms, where the prophet speaketh thus: 'An horse is a vain thing to save a man; neither doth he by the greatness of his strength preserve the rider;' Ps. xxxiii. 17. The root of the latter part is in another, where it is said, 'Salvation belongeth unto the Lord,' Ps. iii. 8. It is lawful to make ready the horse, or to prepare any means or instruments

for the battle. For though God can, yet he will not save us ordinarily, without our own care and labour. But it is not lawful to put confidence in the horse or any other creature; for no creature can help or profit us without the Creator. It is the Lord that giveth the victory in the battle. For therein that part shall prevail, be it stronger or weaker, greater or smaller, which he favoureth. If the horse be not to be trusted unto in the wars, that is, with flesh and blood, much less is the natural soul in the combat with principalities and powers. If the conquering of men be from the Lord, how much more is the victory over Satan and his angels from him? Certainly the mind may prepare itself against temptation; but unless the Lord resist and vanquish from above, it cannot possibly win the field.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1. *A name is to be desired above great riches: favour is better than silver or gold.*

Two good things of this life are herein preferred before the goods of this world. The former is a name; that is to say, reputation or a good report. This name is not that commendation which is given to a man by the wicked for doing of that which pleaseth their humour; but it is that praise which proceedeth out of the mouth of the godly, or, at least, that is gotten by well-doing. This glory or fame is more excellent than all the treasures of this world. For it maketh a man's speeches and actions the more acceptable; it spreadeth his virtues unto his glory, and the stirring up of others; it remaineth after death; it doth good to the children of him who is well spoken of; and finally, it is a means of advancement. Nevertheless, howsoever a name is so great a blessing, yet the small reckoning wherein some of the godly are often in this world is no curse nor disadvantage unto them, because the Lord seeth obscurity to be more meet for them, and turneth it to be more profitable unto them. Again, although good report be so precious a jewel as hath been declared, yet reproach for doing well is no evil, but rather a glory, seeing it is a commendable and happy thing to suffer and to be ill-spoken of for righteousness' sake. To have a name with God, to have a

name with the angels of heaven, finally, to have a name among good men, this is a thing to be desired above all worldly goods. The second good thing here commended is favour, which is said to be better than silver and gold. Favour in this place is that good liking whereby any person is acceptable and gracious in the eyes of God or man. This favourable affection is to be prized above money. For from the favour of God proceedeth salvation; from the favour of men springeth advancement, a rich and comfortable marriage, pardon of offences, freedom out of troubles, the obtaining of all sorts of suits, and many other benefits and comforts. Hence it is that we say, in our common speech, that friendship must help justice, for a man's cause is ended as he is friended, and that a friend in the court is better than a penny in the purse. These things being true and sure which have been spoken, let us first learn this lesson. If we lose all other things, yet to labour to keep our credit. Secondly, To follow after whatsoever is acceptable unto God and unto men, that we may have the favour of them both. Thirdly, Not to impair the estimation or account that any is in upon just desert. Last of all, Through good report and ill report, and through love and hatred, to walk on forward in our callings.

Ver. 2. *The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all.*

In the former part of this sentence is shewed that two sorts of people, differing from each other in condition, not only are in the world, but as occasion falleth out, light one upon another. Sometimes the rich and the poor meet in the church, sometimes in the highway, sometimes about this business, and sometimes about that. A like phrase to that which here is set down we have in the psalm, where it is said, 'Mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace do kiss each other,' Ps. lxxxv. 10. In the latter part of this proverb is taught that poverty and riches fall not out by chance and fortune, but by the will and providence of the Lord. For whereas it is said that the Lord is the maker of them all; the meaning is, that although there is difference between the estate of the rich man and the poor man in these outward things, yet they are both alike and equal, in that they are the Lord's workmanship and creatures, formed and made by him according to his

image, and placed in that condition whereof they are.

*Ver. 3. The prudent man seeth the evil and hideth himself: but the foolish go on still, and are punished.*

We must be wise as serpents, and harmless as the doves. The serpent hideth himself when he spieth a danger, and so doth he that is wary prevent and avoid perils. The first property of the prudent man is, that he seeth the evil, to wit, by the enlightening of God's Spirit, which giveth unto him a sense and feeling of the greatness of sin, and of the certainty of the punishment thereof. Every one doth not perceive this, yea, a man may have scriptures at his fingers' ends, and yet not see the danger of sin or of God's wrath, unless it be revealed unto him by the Lord himself after a peculiar manner. The second property of the prudent man is, upon the sight of the plague or evil, to hide himself. The safest and best hiding of a man's self in danger is flying unto God, and reposing of a man's self in his secret place and under his wings by a lively faith, Ps. xci. 1, and exliiii. 9. But it is also lawful and good not only to hide the heart but the head, and to use the outward means whereby we may be preserved from evils. For although God can save us only by his power, yet he will not without our own care and endeavour, nor without those means which he hath ordained to that intent and purpose. Here occasion is offered to entreat whether a man may fly from the pestilence with a good conscience, or keep himself close in the time of the plague from those that are infected with this noisome disease. But seeing somewhat is set down in my former edition of this book touching this matter, and I shun of purpose the entering into controversies, and the handling of commonplaces in this treatise, I let pass to write anything of this question at this present. Only let us all learn by this doctrine that hath been already taught, to pray unto the Lord that we may not be so brutish as to run into manifest dangers and open snares, but on the contrary side have eagles' eyes to spy and foresee, and hinds' feet to shun and eschew all sorts of evils which may any way hurt us, either in our goods or our names, or our bodies or our souls. And when we perceive that the flood of God's wrath will fall upon the earth, let us with Noah enter into the ark, that therein we

may be safe from the vengeance approaching. Thus to see the plague and to hide himself is the part and custom of the prudent man. But the foolish, in the latter part of the sentence, go on still and are punished. In the which words not only the kindness,<sup>1</sup> but the boldness of vain and presumptuous people is reprov'd, who proceed in wicked actions, or walk on in dangerous places, without any change of mind, or withdrawing of the body, until they be overtaken with some calamity, or overthrown by some judgment of the Lord. Indeed we are to venture even upon the pikes when our calling shall enforce us, or necessity shall constrain us, to be in the midst of dangers, assuring ourselves that through the mercy and power of God, and the ministry of the angels, we shall not dash our foot at any stone, yea, we shall tread upon the lions and the dragons. But great rashness it is, and a grievous tempting of God, to hazard ourselves unnecessarily, and not to shun those evils which by some means we may lawfully withstand or avoid, 2 Pet. ii. 12. Such as thus rush willingly and wittingly into dangers and troubles, are, as the apostle speaketh, brute beasts born to the slaughter, and drawing upon themselves swift destruction. Let us therefore be harmless as the doves, but let us not be simple, as they and divers other birds are, who some of them fear neither arrow nor bullet, and some of them put their necks into the snare, and set their feet upon the lime-twigs. Otherwise, going on in perilous actions or places, we shall be sure to be punished with one punishment or other, which will befall us as a just reward of our rashness, or as a warning to teach us to be more wary and circumspect.

*Ver. 4. The reward of humility and of the fear of the Lord is riches, honour, and life.*

These two virtues, lowliness and the reverence of the Lord, are, as it were, of kin, and linked together. Unto them three blessings are here promised, which men most desire; for, first, They desire wealth, whereby they may attain to the necessaries of this life; secondly, They desire honour, whereby they may get the greater estimation, and come unto offices or bearing of rule; thirdly, They desire life or length of days, to the end that they may continue long in this world. Humility bringeth these

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'blindness' ?—ED.



desired blessings unto men, as it were, by serving for them; for the fear of the Lord procureth the same by preserving from sin, which bringeth shame, poverty, and death.

Ver. 5. *Thorns and snares are in the way of the wicked man: but he that keepeth his soul will depart far off from them.*

By thorns and snares, hurting and entangling evils are meant. These are in the way of the wicked man, for the mischievous person persecuteth the just, and seeketh to entrap him by some subtilty, even as the fowler setteth snares for the silly bird. Thus, as the apostle speaketh, destruction and vexation are in the way of the ungodly, but the way of peace they have not known, Rom. iii. 16. 'He that keepeth his soul will depart from them.' Such a one as is wary and watchful over his own safety will not come near the place of danger, wherein the wicked man layeth thorns and snares for him, but will fly far from it lest he be hurt. It is lawful then, nay, it is our duty to fly from the persecutions of the ungodly, and to remove from those places wherein they set snares for our lives.

Ver. 6. *Teach a child according to the trade of his way: and he will not depart therefrom when he is old.*

This sentence containeth an exhortation to train up children in good learning, and a reason to move us so to do. The duty enjoined is, teach a child. This duty the Lord in the law commandeth parents to perform, saying unto every father, 'These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt whet them on thy children,' Deut. vi. 6. The same duty St Paul chargeth Christian parents to perform, saying unto them, 'Parents, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the instruction and information of the Lord,' Eph. vi. 4. The manner of teaching which parents are to use may be gathered not only by the mention of children, but by the signification of the Hebrew word here set down, which is as much as if it were said, catechise, or enter, as it were. The thing wherein a child is to be instructed is his way, that is, the rule of God's word and of his life; for wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way, but by ruling himself according to God's word? The reason why a child is to be taught is, for that he will not depart from the right way when

he is old, if he be instructed therein when he is young; for by good education he will have a habit of doing well, and retain a savour of that liquor always which was poured into him at the beginning. They that have been well brought up in youth may prove amiss in old age, but surely virtuous education at the beginning is a good means to cause men to continue in virtue to the end.

Ver. 7. *The rich man ruleth over the poor: and the borrower is servant to the lender.*

Because the poor man standeth in need of the rich, he that is wealthy becometh his lord; for he commandeth him to do his work for the wages which he gives to him, and rebuketh him if he do not well. Moreover, by reason the rich can bear out the charges of government, they are commonly chosen into offices, and so rule over the poor. Finally, for that the rich carry the greater countenance and credit with them, they commonly usurp authority, and bear away the sway in all matters and in all places wherein they live. Likewise, 'the borrower is servant to the lender.' For he that goeth a-borrowing, as we say, goeth a-sorrowing. He that doth so loseth his liberty, blusheth oftentimes when he meeteth his creditor, cappeth and croucheth to him, or selleth himself to be his drudge, that with his labour and bondage he may pay the debt which he hath incurred.

Ver. 8. *He that soweth iniquity shall reap affliction: and as concerning the rod, the wrath thereof shall consume it.*

It is meet and just that he which doth evil should suffer condign punishment for his evil-doing.<sup>1</sup> This cometh as oft to pass as here is shewed, as it falleth out that he that soweth bad seed hath but a bad harvest. Again, it is right and equal that the authority or power which is abused should be taken away and abolished. This also as often cometh to pass, as is shewed in the latter part of this sentence, as it falleth out that the hard stroke of the rod or staff doth break or knap it into pieces; for therein it is said that, as concerning the rod, 'the wrath thereof shall consume it.' Whereby is meant, that the abusing of rule unto rage or cruelty causeth an overthrow thereof, which, how true it is, the examples of the tyrants in all ages declare. Others translate the latter part of this sentence otherwise, but the

<sup>1</sup> ושבט עברתו יבלה, Et virgam, furor ejus consumet.

sense which they give thereof is all one in effect with this here set down.

Ver. 9. *He that hath a good eye shall be blessed: for he giveth of his bread to the poor.*

The Lord loveth a cheerful giver, as the apostle teacheth. He is a cheerful giver that hath a good eye. For he doth not grieve to see the goods go from him, as doth the niggard: but pitying the necessity of the poor, he is glad, and looketh merrily when he bestoweth his liberality. He that hath such a heart and eye shall be blessed; for not only men will wish him well, but the Lord himself will pour upon him store of temporal and spiritual blessings, so that the fruits of good graces shall increase within him. 1 Cor. ix. 10. 'For he giveth of his bread to the poor.' Seeing he bestoweth food and suchlike necessaries on the needy, the just and merciful God will increase his corn, whereof bread is made, and the gifts of his grace in him, which are better and far more excellent than the fruits of the earth.

Ver. 10. *Cast out the scorner, and strife will go out: and suing and reproaching will cease.*

All remedies are first to be tried and applied to heal the wound that is made; but that member of the body which is incurable is to be cut off, lest the rest that are whole be thereby corrupted. In like manner, thou that art a magistrate, a minister, or ruler of a household, art to cast out the scorner—that is to say, to remove or cut off the obstinate person who will not be amended, and who by his scorning and scoffing raiseth contention, from thy jurisdiction, from thy congregation, and from thy family. Divers like precepts are given in the Scripture. Our Saviour in the Gospel willeth his disciples to count him that will not hear the church as a heathen and a publican, Mat. viii. 17. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews admonisheth them to take heed that there be not among them any root of bitterness—that is, any contentious person, by whom many might be infected and provoked to dissension, Heb. xii. 15. The apostle Paul likewise chargeth the Thessalonians not to keep company with such a member of the church as walketh disorderly, or disobeyeth his doctrine, 2 Thes. iii. 14. The same apostle wisheth that such as did trouble the church of Galatia were cut off—to wit, by the censure of

excommunication, Gal. v. 12. Sarah would not endure Ishmael and Hagar, but moved Abraham to cast out both these scorners, and removed both the bondwoman and her son from her family. If neither these holy precepts nor these godly examples can move us to practise this duty, yet the reason set down in the latter part of this sentence should prevail with us; for therein is shewed, that by casting out the scorner three great evils are cast out. The first is strife—that is to say, brawling and fighting; the second is suing—that is to say, defending and proving in courts of judgment, or prosecuting of controversies; the third is reproaching—that is, railing and reviling, libelling, and all manner of defacing and disgracing. If the scorner be as our right eye, or as our right hand, he is to be plucked out and cast away.

Ver. 11. *As concerning him that loveth pureness of heart grace is in his lips, the king will be his friend.*

Every man's words that is able to speak readily or finely of matters are not acceptable, nor draw favour or liking to him that uttereth them. For, as we have before heard, excellent talk becometh not a fool; and, as afterward is taught in this book, a parable is uncomely in an ungodly man's mouth. But as concerning him that loveth pureness of heart, as touching such a person as is void of dissimulation, and as is delighted with truth and holiness, grace is in his lips, his words are gracious and pleasant, and like to precious liquor that cometh out of a sweet and clean vessel. See an example, Ps. ci. 'The king will be his friend.' The prince will affect him, and join him near unto him.

Ver. 12. *The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge: but he overthroweth the word of the transgressor.*

God is the defender of truth, and the rooter out of falsehood. By the eyes of the Lord his love and tender care is meant, who herein is like to those men who never turn away their sight from those whom they affect. This loving care of the Lord doth preserve knowledge—that is to say, maintain the testimony of truth and sound doctrine. 'But he overthroweth the words of the transgressor'—that is to say, he revealeth in time, and abolisheth in the end, all error and falsehood.

Ver. 13. *The slothful man saith, A lion is without, I shall be slain in the streets.*

In this parable the behaviour of sluggards when they are called about their work, is notably painted out. The sense thereof is, that the idle person doth indeed so behave himself, as if one called to go abroad about some business should plead that therefore he will not go out of doors because a lion is in the streets. By the slothful man, such a one is meant as delighteth in idleness or loitering. By the lion abroad, some great imagined danger shewed out. Imagined I say, because the sluggard thinketh a lamb to be a lion, and counteth a small danger great. Whereas the sluggard speaketh thus: 'I shall be slain in the streets;' he sheweth that he feareth not only some harm, but death itself. To be brief, thus much here is taught, that although it is not the use of idle persons to utter the self-same words which are set down in this place, yet indeed they always so behave themselves as if they spake them. For the slothful hinder themselves from their work by feigning of lets and fearing of dangers, as loss of life, or of favour, or of liberty, or of possessions, having always one excuse or other, either in their hearts or in their mouths.

Ver. 14. *The mouth of strange women is as a deep pit: he that is a detestation to the Lord shall fall therein.*

The latter sin is oftentimes a punishment of that sin which before hath been committed. Among all the evils in the world, there is scant any worse than the mouth, that is, the looks and speech, of strange women. This is resembled very fitly to a pit, because it causeth men to fall into the sin of fornication and suchlike vices. It is no less aptly compared to a deep pit, because he that falleth therein cannot rise or get out again, but is plunged into eternal and most fearful destruction and bottomless misery. 'He that is a detestation to the Lord shall fall therein.' Such a one as God forsaketh because of his former wickedness, being delivered up by him into a reprobate sense through a peculiar kind of revenge, shall be seduced by the mouth of the harlot. He shall be as a beast pursued by the hunter, and driven into the pit or snare. Oh fearful and most severe, yet withal most righteous judgment of the Lord! more bitter and deadly than wormwood or any plague.

Ver. 15. *Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child: but the rod of correction will drive it away.*

Correction much helpeth unto the changing of corrupt nature. 'Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child.' Frowardness and simplicity spreadeth itself throughout the whole flesh of youth, but especially hath abode in their souls, wherein it is deeply rooted; for their reason is weak, their will wayward, and their whole heart inclined and addicted to evil. Hence it is that Job, chap. xi. 12, compareth a child new born to a wild ass colt, that is most foolish and rude, and never was broken. Notwithstanding that foolishness is bound up in such sort in the heart of a child, as that it is fast tied thereunto, as a pack or fardel is to a horse's back; yet, as is declared in the latter part of this sentence, 'the rod of correction will drive it away.' If instruction by words will not chase away sin, yet chastisement will, so that it be moderate, and joined with speeches of admonition. Cruelty and continual beating will not do it, but correction and moderate chastisement will not only drive away foolishness, but give and work wisdom; as afterward is taught in this book.

Ver. 16. *He that oppresseth the poor to increase his own substance, giving to the rich, shall surely come to poverty.*

Although this verse may so be translated, as if that thereby two sorts of people were taxed, who oftentimes come to poverty, to wit, both those who pull unto themselves the goods of those which live in want, and those that either favour, or, in the humour of vainglory, send rich presents to the wealthy, or feed them sumptuously; yet, nevertheless, rather one threatening alone against those that wrong the poor seemeth therein to be contained; for both the Hebrew words so lie in the original text as they have been set down, and they are so turned by the old translator. Now surely it is a great sin for a man to oppress the poor to increase his own substance; for he that is brought low in his estate is rather to be relieved than to be pilled or or polled. Nevertheless this is a common practice in the world, by usury and such deceitful means to pluck from the poor that little which they have. He that dealeth thus to multiply his riches, shall in the end come to want, and himself be spoiled. For 'giving to the rich, he shall surely come to poverty.' That is to say, being compelled to give to the mighty men of the world, to the end they would wink at

him, or protect him against his adversaries, he shall be brought at the last to a poor estate, being sucked dry, and preyed upon by them.

Ver. 17. *Incline thine ear, and hearken to the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.*

Ver. 18. *For it shall be pleasant if thou keep these sayings in thy belly; and if they be directed together in thy lips.*

Ver. 19. *To the end that thy confidence may be in the Lord, I have shewed knowledge this day unto thee.*

Ver. 20. *Have not I written to thee most princely sayings in counsels and understanding?*

Ver. 21. *Making known unto thee that which is certain, and speeches of truth; that in thy words thou mayest return the truth to those that send to thee?*

From the beginning of the tenth chapter unto the beginning of these verses, divers brief sentences have been set down, rather by way of doctrine than of exhortation. Now that style being left or altered, Solomon returneth to take unto him the person of a father, and to speak after that manner which he used in the nine first chapters. A grave exhortation, enforced by certain reasons, is contained in these five verses. *Incline thine ears, and hearken to the words of the wise,* bend the sense of hearing, which is the entry of understanding, unto the speeches of the learned, *and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.* Moreover, bend the inward powers of thy soul unto my doctrine. *For it shall be pleasant if thou keep these sayings in thy belly, and if they be directed together in thy lips;* for my lessons will be sweeter unto thee than the honey or the honeycomb, if they be laid up in thine heart, and fitly uttered with thy lips. *To the end that thy confidence may be in the Lord, I have shewed knowledge this day unto thee.* To the intent that thou mayest not despair, nor yet leave unto thine own wisdom, I have at this time given thee such instruction as sheweth both Jehovah to be the true God, and describeth him to be just, merciful, wise, and omnipotent; and also declareth the duties of obedience wherein men are to walk. Wherefore see that thou regard my doctrine, and observe the same. *Have not I written unto thee most princely sayings in counsels and understanding? making known unto thee that which is certain, and speeches of truth; that in thy words thou mayest return the truth to*

those that send to thee?' Standeth not the case so that I have taken pains to set down in writing, not base or common, but rare and royal sentences, by way of advice and doctrine, teaching and declaring not fancies which shall vanish, nor fables which shall never come to pass, but truths which shall be performed in their season, and are to be believed, to the end thou mayest be able to render a reason of thy doings to those that shall call thee to account, and give sound advice to those that shall require thy counsel? Like persuasions to hearken to wholesome doctrine as are set down in the two last of these verses, are elsewhere used in the Scripture. The apostle Paul saith to the Galatians, 'Behold, how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand,' Gal. vi. 11. The apostle John saith 'These words of God are true,' Rev. xix. 9. Our Saviour Christ saith, 'Heaven and earth shall pass, but one jot or tittle of the law shall not pass till all be fulfilled,' Mat. ix. 18. Before in this book Solomon hath said, 'I will utter the words of rulers,' Prov. viii. 6. There he useth a word in the Hebrew which noteth out those governors which guide and lead the people. Here he useth a word which signifieth those nobles that are in the third place next to the king. To conclude the comparing of places of Scripture, which were an endless work, whereas it is said in the end of these verses that thou mayest in thy words return the truth to those that send to thee, this phrase accordeth well with that exhortation of the apostle Peter, wherein he willeth every Christian to be ready to render a reason unto those that shall call them to account of their faith, 1 Peter iii. 15.

Ver. 22. *Rob not the poor because he is poor: neither tread down the afflicted in the gate:*

Ver. 23. *For the Lord pleadeth their cause, and will spoil their soul that spoil them.*

In this precept the Holy Ghost dissuadeth from a vice which is both very heinous and common in the world. 'Rob not the poor because he is poor.' do wrong to no man, but in no case to the needy person; least of all in this respect, that he is not able to resist or revenge thee. It is great inhumanity and cruelty to oppress him that is already pressed down, and therefore is rather to be relieved than further to be molested. 'Neither tread down

the afflicted in the gate.' Above all things, abuse not thy might, even in the seat of justice, to overthrow the right of him that is wrongfully pursued or grievously distressed. It were great injustice to beat down the afflicted in that place, wherein, if they be innocent, they are to be relieved and defended. Yet this is often done by rich and mighty men, who, by slandering, corrupting of the judges, and delaying of the suits, do even break the hearts and backs of the poor. 'For the Lord pleadeth their cause.' For although the afflicted cannot defend themselves, or others refuse to plead for them, yet the Eternal, who is their proper judge, will, by preserving them, shew himself their patron, and will spoil their soul that spoil them; and moreover, by revenging their enemies, will shew himself to be a punisher of oppressors.

Ver. 24. *Make no friendship with an angry man; neither go with a furious person:*

Ver. 25. *Lest thou learn his ways, and receive destruction to thine own soul.*

Fellowship with those who are hasty and unbridled of their affections is here forbidden. 'Make no friendship with an angry man.' Choose not him to be thy familiar friend who is of a wrathful disposition, neither go with a furious person, neither walk in the presence of a moody person, who is soon provoked, and useth also to provoke others. Some by nature somewhat hasty are not utterly to be rejected or excluded from our company, if through God's grace they bridle themselves in any good measure; but such as neither stay their passions at all by reason or God's Spirit, are fit to live alone as dragons and wild beasts. 'Lest thou learn his ways.' Lest by his example and company thou be infected with his vices; for he is an ill companion who hindereth goodness or furthereth evil. 'And receive destruction to thine own soul.' And lest thou meet with a deadly blow at his hands; for the furious person spareth not to shed blood, and sometimes is wont to mischief or slay his nearest and dearest friends.

Ver. 26. *Be not of the number of them that touch the hand, nor of them that promise to pay debts.*

Ver. 27. *If thou hast not wherewith to make recompense, why caustest thou that the creditor should take thy bed from under thee?*

A precept is herein given to the poor to take heed

of suretyship, and a reason is added thereunto. 'Be not of the number of them that touch the hand. Be not one that maketh rash and hasty bargains. 'Nor of them that promise to pay debts.' Neither be one that easily promiseth to become surety. 'If thou hast not wherewith to make recompense, why caustest thou that the creditor should take thy bed from under thee?' Seeing thou art not able to perform thy covenant, what reason hast thou to cast thyself into such extreme misery as that thou shalt be put to give or sell the bed whereon thou liest, and so to part with a thing most necessary, to the end thou mayest discharge the debt which thou owest for another man? Suretyship is not evil in itself, but rash suretyship is a sin. Suretyship is not a thing unlawful of its own nature, but to some it is very hurtful, and to all dangerous.

Ver. 28. *Thou shalt not remove the ancient bounds which thy forefathers have set.*

Those good thiugs are not rashly or lightly to be changed, which by law or custom of the elders are received. Moses saith in Deuteronomy, 'Remove not the ancient bound of thy neighbour which the elders have set down, in the possession which thou shalt possess, in the land which the Lord thy God shall give thee to inherit,' Dent. xix. 14. The same precept Solomon here repeateth and giveth to his son. In Judea, the changing of the marks of lands did breed great confusion in the year of jubilee, wherein the grounds were to be restored to the first possessors thereof, or at least to their posterity. Among us, encroaching on other men's possessions, and the deceitful displacing of the signs of our own inheritances, causeth suits of law, frays, and slaughter oftentimes. If men's grounds should not be severed by creeks, or ditches, or hedges, or some marks, much wrong would be done, and none should know his own. Let men make as little conscience of this sin as they will, the word of God pronounceth every one accursed that removeth his neighbour's mark. Great men and gentlemen, look you encroach not upon other men's possessions, or look for a curse upon your encroaching.

Ver. 29. *Hast thou seen a man diligent (Heb., swift) in his business? he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean persons.*

As slowness is grievous, so swiftness in working

is acceptable. For he that is quick in despatching any matter, performeth the same in a short time, and by a ready course. 'Hast thou seen a man swift in his business?' Hast thou observed one who despatcheth any work of the body or mind with numbness and dexterity, or that flieth about his master's errands? 'He shall stand before kings.' He shall be received into the service of nobles and princes, who are wont to delight greatly in those that are quick-spirited and painful. 'He shall not stand before mean or base persons.' He shall not be suffered long to live obscurely, or to have some base place or office. Here it may be objected, how is this promise of God's word true, seeing many diligent and painful labourers are meanly provided for, whilst idle serving-men and loitering ruffians are entertained in many great men's houses? Truly these times are very corrupt; but yet oftentimes it cometh to pass, which is the point here taught, that such as are very serviceable and laborious are hired and advanced before loiterers and sluggards. Now, howsoever, sometimes it is to be seen that the most diligent and readiest to do good service are now neglected in this world, yet herein they are to comfort themselves, that they shall hereafter stand before the King of glory in heaven. Oh what a high dignity will that be, above the glory of princes, and equal to the honour of angels, for ever to behold the face of God, and to stand in his most comfortable presence! There will be no doubt more joy in one day in standing before the Lord, than can be in a hundred years by standing before the most gracious and glorious prince in all the world.

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#### CHAPTER XXIII.

Ver. 1. *When thou shalt sit to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee :*

Ver. 2. *Otherwise thou shouldst put a knife into thy throat, if thou wert of a greedy appetite.*

Ver. 3. *Desire not his dainty dishes : for it is deceitful meat.*

We are taught in these sentences how to behave ourselves when we are at some great feasts, or at the tables of great personages. They contain two exhortations, enforced by their several reasons. The

former is, 'Consider diligently what is before thee;' that is to say, ponder and observe with wisdom and discretion the nature and the number of those meats and drinks which are placed on the table. This exhortation, set down in the first verse, is enforced by a reason set down in the second, which is, 'Otherwise thou shouldst put a knife into thy throat if thou wert of a greedy appetite;' that is to say, else, if thou wert intemperate of thy diet, thou mightst, by eating or drinking too much, kill thyself in such sort as if that thou didst put a knife to thy throat, and so become the author of thine own death. The latter exhortation is, 'Desire not his dainty dishes;' that is to say, lust not after, nor covet with an unbridled affection, his pleasant delicacies. The reason why delicious fare should not incontinently be desired is for that it is deceitful meat; that is to say, it is like a bait under which lurketh a hook, and such food it is as will easily overtake a man if he be not very watchful and wary.

Ver. 4. *Travail not to attain to riches : cease from this wisdom of thine.*

Ver. 5. *Wilt thou cause thine eyes to fly after them ? (thou mayest) but they will not be found : for they will make themselves wings like the eagle, which flieth up to heaven.*

It is not unlawful for a man to take pains in his calling that he may get the goods of this life, and rise up unto wealth; but to travail to attain to riches, that is, to drudge and moil for the muck of this world, and for the same to over-toil the body or torment the mind, is a property of an earthly-minded man, and a fault here forbidden. Nevertheless this worldliness is counted wisdom, and it is indeed the wisdom of the children of this world, who in their generation are more politic and prudent than the children of light. But seeing this is not the wisdom of God, but the wisdom of a man's own brain, and seeing the cunning devices whereby worldlings go about to hook riches to themselves, are but crafty sleights and evil vices indeed, every one is to cease from this his own wisdom, and to labour that he may be truly wise indeed. Although riches quickly vanish, and although some labour in vain to be rich, yet many a covetous man there is in the world that setteth his heart upon them, and casteth many a long look after them. Unto such a greedy wretch

the Spirit of God saith in the beginning of the fifth verse, 'Wilt thou cause thine eyes to fly after them?' that is to say, wilt thou desire them too earnestly, and follow them too eagerly? Wilt thou do as falconers do, who, when they spy any fine birds, look after them a long time, or send out their hawks to catch them? 'Thou mayest, but they will not be found;' that is to say, riches will not be caught by thine eyes, but fly away from thee, and never come to thine hands. Indeed sometimes they that earnestly hunt after the goods of this world attain to great abundance of earthly treasures, but oftentimes also it cometh to pass that, as the son of Sirach speaketh, 'He that moileth and hasteneth, and taketh carping care to be rich, hath by so much the less by how much he travaileth,' Eccclus. xi. 11. Whereas, in the last place, it is said that riches will make 'themselves wings like the eagle, which flieth up to heaven.' This borrowed speech is added to express the impossibility of attaining to that wealthy estate which the Lord will not have some man come unto; for the way of an eagle in the air cannot be seen nor found out, by reason that she flieth both so high and so swiftly.

Ver. 6. *Eat not the meat of him that hath an evil eye, and desire not his dainty dishes :*

Ver. 7. *For as he grudgeth<sup>1</sup> his own soul, so he will say unto thee, Eat and drink, when his heart is not with thee.*

Ver. 8. *Thou shalt vomit out thy morsels which thou hast eaten, and lose thy pleasant speeches.*

We are, as much as may stand with civility, to abstain from receiving the gifts, or using the courtesy of niggards, who are called men of evil eyes, because they look awry and sourly on those who fare the better for them. 'Eat not the meat of him that hath an evil eye.' Either repair not at all to the table of the miser, or thereat feed very sparingly, and desire not his dainty dishes. In any case, lust not after his delicacies in such sort, as by too great coveting thereof, or delight therein, to be drawn to go to his house, or to feed too greedily at his table. 'For as he grudgeth his own soul, so he will say to thee, Eat and drink, when his heart is not with thee ;'

<sup>1</sup> Shayar, or Sayar, as some read. The former word signifieth to measure, the latter to fear. I follow the latter reading, and labour to express the sense.

that is to say, like as he cannot afford his own belly a good morsel of meat, so it grieveth him that thou shouldst eat up his victuals, howsoever he will bid thee welcome, and pray thee not to spare. That it is the custom of niggards to spare from their own bellies and to grudge at their guests, not only daily experience witnesseth, but the son of Sirach, who may well be called an expounder of the parables of this book, plainly declareth; for in the book called Ecclesiasticus, he saith, 'There is none worse than he that grudgeth himself, and this is the reward of his maliciousness; for if he do good to himself he doth it against his will, and at last he will declare his maliciousness. The evil eye grudgeth bread, and is scanty at his table,' Eccclus. xxiv. 6, 2, 10. Great cause there is why thou shouldst abstain from filling thyself with the delicacies of the envious man or niggard that hath an evil eye; for if thou surfeitest thereof by reason that thou hast desired them too greedily, 'thou shalt vomit out thy morsels which thou hast eaten;' that is to say, cast up again the dainty food whereon thou hast fed. And, moreover, thou shalt lose thy pleasant speeches if thou goest to his table; for seeing he will be grieved to see thee eat up his victuals, thou shalt not be able to move him to mirth, or to delight him by any merry talk or courteous speech which thou, as the manner is, in the time of the feast shall utter. Wherefore also, as a man is in wisdom to abstain from the niggard's feast, so he is in discretion to withhold instruction and gracious speeches from the ears of the senseless and graceless fool, according as is taught in the verse which followeth.

Ver. 9. *Speak not in the ears of a fool : for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.*

The admonition here given is in effect all one with that precept of our Saviour in the Gospel, 'Cast not pearls before swine, and give not holy things unto dogs,' Mat. vii. 6; by comparing of which parable with this it appeareth that we are not forbidden to instruct any simple or foolish people, but continually to labour in instructing or admonishing of those who are profane and unrepentant sinners, and whose lives are altogether beastly, and whose rage against the truth is bloody. We must not speak in the ears, that is, pour forth wholesome counsel continually in the hearing of such fools and

scorners, for every such fool will despise the wisdom of thy words; that is, every such hog or dog, as it were, will but scorn thy prudent speeches, be they never so excellent, either or that they do not understand them, or for that they cannot like them, as being quite contrary to their humours and dealings.

Ver. 10. *Remove not the bonds of the little ones; neither enter into the fields of the fatherless:*

Ver. 11. *For their revenger is strong; he himself will plead their cause against thee.*

By how much it is an easier matter to wrong such as cannot help themselves, by so much it is a greater offence to do them any hurt. The Lord chargeth every one of the people of Israel in Exodus, chap. xxii. 22, saying 'Thou shalt not molest any widow or orphan.' To the same purpose speaketh Solomon in this place when he saith, 'Remove not the bonds of the little ones; neither enter into the fields of the fatherless;' that is to say, neither encroach upon the grounds of those who, by reason of their young age, can make no resistance, neither take possession unjustly of the lands of orphans, whose parents are departed, and who cannot help themselves. Now great cause there is why thou that goest about to defraud and oppress them shouldst abstain from offering any wrong or violence unto them. For their revenger is strong; that is, God, that is the helper of the helpless, is full of might and power, though they be weak. 'He himself will plead their cause against thee.' Albeit they find no patrons in the world, yet he will defend their right, and punish thee for the wrong which thou dost offer unto them. No man lightly will be so bold to touch or injure the servant of a mighty man, for that he knoweth that his master will revenge his quarrel if he complain unto him. And shall any dare to wrong the poor, or to hurt helpless people, who are the servants of the Lord of hosts, yea, and, if they be faithful, the kinsmen also of Christ Jesus their Redeemer and revenger? The greatest potentates in the world shall thoroughly smart for it, if they injure or oppress the least of those little ones that believe in Christ Jesus.

Ver. 12. *Apply thine heart to correction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.*

Two means there are whereby wisdom is attained, whereof the one is inward, the other outward. Both these every one here is willed to apply, that is, very

earnestly to bend. The heart, in the day of adversity, is to be applied to correction, that is, to bear affliction, to ponder wherefore it is sent, and to receive due fruit thereby. The ears, when there is any wise counsellor or instructor, are to be applied to the words of knowledge. For by hearing of good instructions and precepts learning is attained unto. Yea, as the apostle witnesseth, faith cometh by hearing, so that they are foolish and faithless people who neglect to hear good advice, but especially who contemn the preaching of the word.

Ver. 13. *Withdraw not chastisement from the child; when thou shalt smite him with the rod he shall not die.*

Ver. 14. *Smite him with the rod, and thou shalt deliver his soul from hell.*

Parents are now admonished to correct their children, and moved hereunto by the declaration of the great benefit which they shall procure unto them by using the rod, and chastening them according to their deserts. 'Withdraw not chastisement from the child;' neither altogether withhold correction from that youth that deserveth the same, nor correct him too seldom or too sparingly. 'When thou shalt smite him with the rod he shall not die.' When thou shalt moderately chasten him with a twig or wand thou shalt only cause his flesh to smart, but not kill or slay him, for a rod will break no bones. 'Smite him with the rod, and thou shalt deliver his soul from hell.' Scourge him with moderation, and he by this means being amended, will not afterward deserve temporal or eternal death, but shall be preserved by the stripes which he hath received from the grave and destruction. The cockering of parents is the very cause that divers children come to the gallows, and the correction which wise fathers and mothers exercise their sons and daughters with, is the means whereby divers others are saved from sin and the punishments thereof, yea, and oftentimes from the very place of execution.

Ver. 15. *My son, if thine heart be wise, mine heart, even mine also, shall rejoice.*

Ver. 16. *And my reins shall leap for joy, whilst thy lips speak upright things.*

What can a father more wish unto his child than that he may be wise, and utter gracious speeches? In these two respects the spiritual father here declareth that his joy shall be full, if he shall per-



ceive his son to have both an understanding heart, and a lip of truth and grace. 'If,' saith he, 'thine heart be wise,' that is, if thy soul be sanctified, 'mine heart, even mine, shall rejoice,' my soul, even mine, who am thy father, shall be glad. 'And my reins shall leap for joy.' Moreover my inward parts shall be moved to exceeding cheerfulness and triumph. 'Whilst thy lips speak upright things.' In the mean season, whilst thou utterest such speeches as are true, just, holy, and gracious, which to do is a very hard matter, but a thing much acceptable to God, profitable to men, and very praiseworthy. For, as afterward is affirmed in this book, people will kiss the lips of him that uttereth upright things.

Ver. 17. *Let not thine heart envy sinners: but (remain) in the fear of the Lord all day long.*

Ver. 18. *For surely there is a reward; and thine hope shall not be cut off.*

To envy sinners is to be moved at the prosperity, and to love the company of the ungodly. The fear of the Lord is that pure spouse and lovely lady, as it were, to whom we ought to bear such a zeal and affection as that we should sue unto her continually, and delight always to be in her company, to enjoy her presence, not caring for the wicked, or the glory wherein they flourish. Why so? 'For surely there is a reward; and thine hope shall not be cut off.' That is, howsoever the wicked shall be destroyed, and the state of the ungodly fade away, yet thou shalt not lose thy labour, but that which thouapest shall at last be granted, though it be long first, even the possessing, not only of the reverence of the Lord, but therewith of the crown of life and eternal glory.

Ver. 19. *Hearken, my son, and direct thine heart in this way.*

This sentence may very well be joined to the two former, seeing therein, as it seemeth, the spiritual father concludeth the former exhortation. Seeing knowledge cometh by hearing, the spiritual father doth first will his son to hearken. Secondly, Forasmuch as a man may hear wise counsel and yet be never the wiser, if he perceive or receive it not, he bildeth him, laying aside all ignorance and childish folly, to be wise. Last of all, For that it is not enough to know the truth, unless it be loved, delighted in and embraced in the affection, he exhorteth him to direct his heart in this way, that is, to cause

his soul to affect and follow after the fear of the Lord, and not the way of the wicked.

Ver. 20. *Be not of the number of those that are bibbers of wine, or of those that glut themselves with flesh:*

Ver. 21. *For the drinker and feaster shall become poor; and the sleeper shall be clothed with rags.*

Divers there are whose belly is their god, of whose fellowship the Holy Ghost now warneth us to take heed. 'Be not of the number of those that are bibbers of wine.' Follow not the custom nor company of such as haunt the taverns, or use to quaff in one cup of strong drink after another. 'Or of those that glut themselves with flesh.' Neither yet be of their crew or society who exceedingly love good cheer, and cram themselves full of the daintiest meat that can be gotten. Here I cannot but think upon the foolish custom of the papists, and smile at their blind devotion and witless dealing. Forsooth, because Christ fasted forty days and forty nights, they also abstain so long, but not from all food, as he did, yet from all flesh, which, as they imagine, puffeth up the body, and therefore is in so holy a time not to be tasted, as is consecrated, as it were, unto the Spirit. In the mean season, as if there were not a flesh of fishes, or as if here Solomon had by the name of flesh forbidden only the over-charging of the stomach with the flesh of fowls or beasts of the earth, they spare not to fill themselves with the daintiest fishes of the seas, and most pleasant fruits of the orchards or gardens. As for wine and strong drinks, they make no conscience to abstain from them, nor to pour them in by bowlfuls, although here the Holy Ghost hath as well condemned bibbing of wine as cramming in of flesh. But the truth is, that neither eating of flesh nor drinking of wine is in itself unlawful, but that excess in both these and either of them is evil, and here forbidden. The reason why surfeiting and drunkenness is to be avoided is, for that 'the drinker and feaster shall become poor; and the sleeper shall be clothed with rags.' Such banqueters as here are spoken of incur poverty, partly through their great expenses, and partly through their losing of the time. And for that much eating and drinking causeth much sleeping, and much sleeping bringeth extreme poverty; to make the vices of drinking and surfeiting the more odious, it is said that the sleeper shall

be clothed in rags, that is, go in torn and patched apparel.

Ver. 22. *Hearken to thy father who hath begotten thee, neither despise thy mother when she shall be old.*

In the former part of this sentence a reason is set down why a father should be heard and obeyed. The reason why thou art to hearken to him is, for that he hath begotten thee; that is, he is the instrument under God of thy being, and the father of thy flesh, as the apostle speaketh. In the latter part of this verse a charge is given to children not to despise their mothers in their old age, or for their old age, but rather in this respect to honour them the more. Indeed there is no cause why the mother should be contemned when she groweth into years. For although her old age maketh her subject to manifold infirmities, yet withal it maketh her wise and reverend and grave, for which cause, as she is at all times to be honoured, so then especially she is to be regarded.

Ver. 23. *Buy truth and sell it not: (likewise) wisdom, instruction, and understanding.*

Properly those things are said to be bought, which are gotten with some cost or labour. Whereas then every one is willed to buy truth, the meaning is that he is to purchase faithfulness and sincerity unto himself, not sparing any pains or charge to this intent and purpose. This heavenly truth, as also the graces here mentioned, is by all good means to be sought after, but it is only to be bought of Jesus Christ, as is taught in the Revelation of St John, chap. iii. 22. As truth is to be bought, so it is not to be sold; for we are not to estrange it from us for anything in the world, nor to make vile account of it, as commonly they do of their possessions that sell them. Truly there are many unthrifths of this sort, who sell and pass away from them the graces of God's Spirit, exchanging them with the vanities of this present life. Now seeing wisdom, instruction, and understanding, of which three virtues much hath before been spoken in this book, are precious jewels as well as truth, they are in like manner to be bought, but not to be sold, especially seeing no man can put them away from him without making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Yet many there are who as easily and willingly forsake and forego these and suchlike gifts of the Spirit,

as Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage.

Ver. 24. *The father of a righteous son doth greatly rejoice: he that begetteth a wise child is glad in regard of him.*

Ver. 25. *Let thy father and thy mother rejoice, and let her that hath born thee skip for joy.*

Again and again doth the Holy Ghost exhort children to labour by all good means that they may be a comfort to their parents. Naturally, the father counteth the well-doing of his son to be his own welfare, and his virtue to be his own glory. Hence it is that the well-disposed father taketh exceeding comfort when he seeth his son both to know the truth, and to practise that which is just and equal. Hence it is also, on the contrary side, that he grieveth not a little when he perceiveth him to be incapable of knowledge, or wicked of life. Seeing it is so, saith the Spirit of God in this place to every child, 'let thy father and thy mother rejoice;' cause both thy parents, by thy wisdom and virtue, to be glad; 'and let her that hath born thee sing for joy;' but especially cause her to whom thou wast a great pain and grief in bringing thee forth, to receive abundant consolation by thy prudent behaviour and upright life.

Ver. 26. *My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes diligently observe my ways.*

Ver. 27. *For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit.*

Ver. 28. *Moreover she lieth in wait as a robber, and multiplieth transgressors among men.*

As the wise father hath before exhorted other of his children to take heed of sundry vices, so here he warneth, as it were, one amongst them whom he perceived to be inclined somewhat unto incontinency, to take heed of fornication. To this end, first he willeth him to give him his heart, that is, his affection, renouncing himself and settling his love only and fully upon the Lord, and the instruments which the Lord useth to call him to repentance, and to draw him to his kingdom. Secondly, He biddeth him to let his eyes diligently observe his ways, that is to say, to apply his understanding and mind, and his whole care, to regard his precepts and the truth, which is the right way wherein he is to walk. Thirdly, He sheweth that there is great cause why

his young son should obey him, and regard his precepts and ways, telling him that there are very dangerous ways in this world, and snares laid in sundry corners. 'For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit.' She is here called a whore and a strange woman, who is wantonly given, being another man's wife. Such a one is as a deep ditch, whereunto a man may easily fall, but he can hardly come out from thence; and as a narrow pit, which is a very dangerous and troublesome hole, whereunto a man may slip at unawares, but therein he cannot stir himself or be at ease. For the naughty woman bringeth distress and trouble, yea, death and destruction, unto her companions. 'Moreover she lieth in wait as a robber, and multieth transgressors among men.' Furthermore, even as a thief lurketh in a den or bush to get a prey, so the wanton woman lieth in wait and useth baits to steal the hearts of men, yea, and prevaileth with many, thus increasing the number of notorious offenders in the world. Wherefore lust not after the strange woman in thine heart, neither cast thine eyes toward her to covet her in thy mind, but resign thine affection unto the Lord, and look upon his law as that only right way wherein thou canst walk safely.

Ver. 29. *To whom is woe? to whom is alas? to whom is strife? to whom is babbling? to whom are wounds without cause? to whom is the redness of the eyes?*

The purpose of the godly father being now to dissuade his son from drunkenness, in this question which he propoundeth he setteth down in a heap the great and sundry evils which this vice bringeth with it. It worketh first of all woe—that is, extreme grief and misery, temporal and eternal; for the Scripture is wont to call every heavy judgment of the Lord in this life, and eternal condemnation, by the name of woe. And certain it is, that as the drunkard shall be plagued in this world, so, without unfeigned repentance, he shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven. Secondly, It worketh *alas*—that is, groaning and sighing by reason of a miserable and poor estate, for so much the word importeth. Thirdly, It causeth strife—to wit, in the time of drinking, at which time drunkards are wont to call one at another, and to brawl and scold and

rage like people out of their wits. Fourthly, It maketh men to babble; for when the wine is in, neither can men commonly keep any secret, neither use they to be silent, but either they pleasantly scoff and jest upon every light occasion, or talk vainly and frivolously, or inveigh bitterly against magistrates, ministers, and good people. Fifthly, Drunkenness causeth wounds without cause; for though the drunkard deserveth well to be punished, yet he is oftentimes beaten when he provoketh no man, yea, and when he knoweth not what is done to him, or how to help himself, or to revenge himself. As to suffer for a good cause is a happy thing, so to be thus wounded without cause is a shame and misery. Last of all, It worketh redness of the eyes; for much drinking causeth humours to abound in the body, and especially in the face, and namely in the eyes, which thereby are oftentimes both blemished and blinded. The profane and beastly drunkards make a jest of this redness of the eyes, and say that they had rather drink out their eyes than that the worms should eat them out. But seeing the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the eyes are, as it were, the lights and windows of this temple, as in blemishing their faces they hurt themselves, so they herein sin against God, who will destroy them that destroy his temple, and cast them into outer darkness, who darken, as it were, the lights of his habitation. This that hath been spoken in this verse against drunkenness may be sufficient to move any reasonable man to abhor this vice; but such as give themselves unto swilling are indeed brute beasts, and therefore nothing almost will prevail with them.

Ver. 30. *Even to them that tarry long at the wine; to them that go and seek out mixed wine (or rack wine.)*

The answer unto the demand in the verse going before is herein contained, which defineth who is the miserable man before spoken of, and describeth drunkards unto us by their properties and conditions. They are in the former place noted to be such as tarry long at the wine; that is, who spend much time in drinking, and are not content with a little strong drink, but pour in one bowlful after another. In the second place, they are declared to be such as go to seek out mixed wine; that is, they haunt the taverns, and search from place to place

where is the pleasantest, strongest, and finest drink, that it may spur them on forward unto all excess. Thus drunkards offend in spending too much time in drinking, in swilling in too much, in seeking their bane, and in labouring to satisfy their dainty taste unto the full.

Ver. 31. *Look not thou upon the wine when it appeareth red, when it sheweth his colour in the cup, or stirreth very kindly.*

A remedy against drunkenness herein is prescribed. 'Look not thou upon the wine when it appeareth red.' Cast not thine eye incontinently upon the drinker<sup>1</sup>; for that which the eye beholdeth the heart coveteth. Looking upon the wine is here forbidden, not as an evil thing, but as a way and means unto evil; so likewise is the beholding of the colour of it, or, as it is in the Hebrew, of the eye of it in the cup. For when it shall have a lovely and a lively look, and when it shall be graced also by the clearness and comeliness of the vessel wherein it is, then it hath the greater force to allure; but especially when it shall stir very kindly, that is to say, leap and spurt in the cup. In which words, as it seemeth, good wine is painted out and resembled to a fair and beautiful damsel, whose cheeks are ruddy, whose eyes are lively and piercing, and whose feet are nimble and dancing, who by these means doth draw the eyes of men toward her, and enamour and entangle their affections with her. The sum of this whole sentence briefly is, that all occasions and provocations unto drunkenness are to be shunned with all care and diligence.

Ver. 32. *In the end it will bite as a serpent, and sting like a cockatrice.*

Lest the pleasantness of the wine deceive and allure our senses, the bitterness and grievous effects thereof are here declared by way of comparison. A serpent or snake greatly hurteth a man by the venomous biting of his teeth. But those poisoned creatures which sting with the tail, as doth the adder, and, as I think, the cockatrice, do work more deadly harm. For some of them pain him whom they sting with extreme torment; some make him run mad, and some cause him to bleed to death. Even so doth wine gulled in without measure affect and destroy such as are given thereto. It troubleth the brain, it inflameth the liver, it overwhelmeth the

stomach, it maketh the belly ache, and the whole body feeble, and causeth in the end deadly diseases. Besides all this, it defileth the conscience, it turneth a man into the shape of a beast, and draweth eternal destruction both upon body and soul. Poverty, shame, sickness, death, and condemnation; these are the effects of drunkenness, than which no bitings or stings of serpents or venomous creatures are more bitter and intolerable.

Ver. 33. *Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall speak froward things.*

Neither the outward senses of the body, nor the inward powers of the mind, as here is shewed, will be able to do their office if wine be immoderately taken. As touching the eyes, they will behold strange women. For drunkards, being inflamed and made merry with much wine, turn their looks towards their neighbours' wives, whom they see to excel in beauty. Thus they have eyes, as the apostle speaketh, full of adultery, and which cease not to sin. As concerning the hearts also of those that are well tippled, they speak froward things. For they bid them lie in wait for the chastity of such strange women as are fair, and they lust after them, and think upon vain and wicked matters. Thus drunkenness causeth such as are given to this vice to commit adultery in their hearts. Now, when the eyes and heart have consented and conspired unto evil, the body commonly will not be long ere it should yield and put it into practice. Wherefore drunkenness causeth wantonness, which is so foul and damnable a sin, as that whatsoever bringeth men thereunto deserveth to be abhorred and fled, even as a toad or a serpent.

Ver. 34. *And thou shalt be like him that lieth in the midst of the sea, and like him that lieth on the top of a mast.*

Whosoever he is that lieth in the midst of the sea, he is in great danger of his life, and overwhelmed with the floods and waves in such sort that he cannot tell what to say or do, or whither to turn himself, being tossed up and down, and compassed with the waters on every side. Such is the estate of the drunkard, who is even overwhelmed with the abundance of humours which wine excessively drunk causeth, so that his senses are taken from him, and he staggereth as he goeth; yea, and oftentimes lieth

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'drink'!—ED.

down in some hole or ditch. Again, he that lieth on the top of a mast is troubled and much shaken with the winds, if there be any tempest; yea, and blown into the sea, if he hold not the faster. So standeth the case with the drunken man; he is carried hither and thither with the giddiness of his head, and lightness of his brain, and is lifted up and down with no small danger, which yet, as being asleep, he perceiveth not at all. They that have any care of themselves would not be in such a case for all the goods of the world; and therefore, seeing drunkenness bringeth men into so fearful and dangerous an estate, it concerneth every one to shun this ugly and detestable vice.

Ver. 35. *Some have stricken me, shalt thou say, yet have I not been sick; some have beaten me, yet I have not felt it: when I shall wake, I will go on and seek after this yet more and more.*

Two other particular harms springing from drunkenness are herein specified, besides those which already have been named. The former of these, senselessness; the latter, sensuality. He that saith, 'Some have stricken me, yet I have not been sick; some have beaten me, yet I have not felt it,' declareth plainly that he is very blind and senseless; for he speaketh of himself as if he were a very stock and stone. As the juice of the grape, so the wine of sin (as of pride and error for example) maketh men even without feeling and benumbed. The drunkard, that although he hath thus been beaten, yet setteth down with himself, that when he awaketh out of his drunkenness and wine, he will go on and seek after his pots still more and more, doth evidently shew that he is no less sensual then senseless; for he plainly declareth, that to enjoy a little pleasure he feareth not nor careth to return to great misery. He is therefore like the dog that returneth to his vomit, and like the sow, that when she hath been washed, hasteneth to tumble again into the mire. He is like unto the horse-leech, which the more it sucketh, the more it thirsteth. Thus the fool repeateth his folly, and the custom of drinking causeth in the drunkard a thirst of drink. Nothing in these verses is spoken of drunkards, but that which daily experience verifieth to be most true. Look on the estate of the pot-companions and good fellows of this world, as they call them, and either you shall see

them to be plagued of the Lord with some special judgment, or to be poor beggars, or to be notorious brabblers or prattlers, or to be marked with some blemish in their bodies or faces. Moreover, you shall see them to be wantons and wanderers, but seldom or never come to repentance, or to leave their wickedness. Nay, this is their custom from day to day, to return to their follies, and to this end to seek out strong drink in the morning, and to sit at it until the evening.

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#### CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1. *Envy not the wicked, neither desire to be with them.*

Ver. 2. *For their heart imagineth destruction, and their lips speak evil.*

When the ungodly either rage in cruelty or flourish in prosperity, the godly are often moved into sore passions, and exercised with wonderful temptations. Sometimes they are stirred up unto anger and impatience, disdain, and being offended that they which deserve the heaviest judgments of the Lord should receive and enjoy his greatest blessings of this life. Sometimes they are tickled and inflamed with a burning desire of being acquainted and in a league with them, to the end they may not be hurt by them, but live in quietness and prosperity together with them. This envying of the wicked, and desiring to be with them, is forbidden in the former of these sentences, as a thing unlawful and greatly hurtful. There is no fellowship nor desire of society between light and darkness; so, likewise, there ought to be in the godly no desire of the company or condition of the ungodly. And as we see that the little lamb can never be brought to be in nature like to the wolf, nor seeketh to be with him in the same place or pasture, so the innocent and just person should never, by any temptation, be drawn to follow the condition or company of the evil man, who setteth himself to work mischief. The only consideration that the hearts of the wicked men imagine destruction, and their lips speak evil, should stay every one from affecting their ways, and desiring their society; as is declared in the second verse. For who would be in love with them, or willingly be like them, who in

wildness of disposition are like the dung,<sup>1</sup> or in venomous maliciousness like unto the serpents? I myself have received comfort hereby, and despised the rage and the glory of the wicked, when I have observed and pondered that they are such men whose hearts are full of guile, pride, covetousness, and suchlike vices, and whose tongues are accustomed to utter blasphemies and lies.

Ver. 3. *By wisdom an house is builded, and by understanding it is established.*

Ver. 4. *And by knowledge the inward rooms thereof are filled with all precious and pleasant substance.*

Sundry virtues are herein commended by their several works, to the end that they all may be laboured after. The first virtue is wisdom, whereby, as is said, a house is builded. Indeed, neither can the foundation of a building be strongly laid, nor the frame thereof be well situated, but by wisdom. And if a material house cannot be erected happily without wisdom, much less can that which is spiritual. The second virtue here commended is understanding, whereby, as is further taught, a house is established or ordered. So it is that skill of disposing matters, meant here by understanding, doth, if it be used in the art of building, square out every part thereof in due proportion, and cunningly set the same together. Likewise, as the beginning of every matter is happily entered on by wisdom, so the ordering and directing thereof is accomplished by understanding. The last virtue here spoken of is knowledge, whereby the inward rooms of the house are filled with all precious and pleasant substance; unto the providing and treasuring up of food, of money, and all things necessary and comfortable, the knowledge of times, of the prices of things, and of the means whereby commodities may be attained, is requisite. Wherefore, as wisdom is that virtue whereby a house is builded, and understanding the gift whereby it is strengthened, so knowledge is the means whereby it is well furnished and filled. It is not to be marvelled at that many young married folk and householders in these days have nothing in their families but want of necessaries and bare walls, seeing they want both wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge, and are full of ignorance and folly.

Ver. 5. *A wise man is to be with might, and a man of understanding to fortify strength.*

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'dog'?—ED.

Ver. 6. *For by policy thou shalt make war for thyself, and by the multitude of counsellors obtain safety.*

It is manifest that might or force of war needeth and requireth a wise man; for no army, be it never so mighty, prevaieth, unless a prudent person lead or rule the same. Wherefore in war, with a multitude of valiant soldiers, wise captains and counsellors are always to be joined and sent for. These are they who, as is shewed in the former of these verses, so fortify strength, as that by their direction and advice valiant and mighty men are able to do a great deal more than they can without them. Hence it is that it is said in the latter of these two verses, that 'by policy thou shalt make war for thyself, and by the multitude of counsellors obtain safety;' by which words is proved that strength is helped by wisdom, and that the instruments of war are made more forcible by men of skill. For seeing, as herein is shewed, the field is won, not by strength, but by devices, and dangers are turned away, not by the might or valour of armed men, but by advice and counsel, it appeareth that wit is above strength, and a furtherance thereunto. A like conclusion is elsewhere made by this our Solomon upon an observation which he had, which also seemeth to have been the occasion and fountain of this instruction. 'This wisdom also,' saith he in the book of the preacher, Eccles. ix. 13, &c., 'have I seen under the sun, which is great unto me: There was a certain small city, and in it a few men; and there came against it a great king, who besieged it and built great forts against it; and there was found therein a poor wise man, who delivered the city by his wisdom; but none remembered the man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength; although the wisdom of the poor be despised, and his words be not heard; and the words of the wise that are lovely are to be heard, rather than the cry of him that beareth rule over fools. Wisdom is better than instruments of war, but one that goeth astray overturneth much good.'

Ver. 7. *Wisdom is too high for a fool: he cannot open his mouth in the gate.*

Ver. 8. *Him that imagineth to do evil, men will call an author of wickedness.*

Ver. 9. *The wickedness of folly is a sin: but a scorner is an abomination unto men.*

The praise of wisdom hath been declared in the verses going before; in these the dispraise of folly is set down. As concerning the fool who is possessed with ignorance and vanity, by reason of his folly, he cannot open his mouth in the gate. He is so pressed down with earthly cares or pleasures, or so hindered by the dulness or blockishness of his senses, that wisdom is too high for him—that is to say, he cannot attain to knowledge, or the good gifts of the Spirit. It may be he hath some desire to become wise; but because he taketh no pains, or hath no faculty in him, he cannot reach to high points of learning. Hence it is that he cannot open his mouth in the gate; for seeing he hath no wisdom, he can have no eloquence, no, nor preferment, if these things be ordered aright. Thus much is meant when mention is here made of opening the mouth, whereby a gift or liberty of speaking is signified, as by the naming of a gate the place of assembling is noted out, which in old times was in the gates of the town or city. In these gates, as is affirmed in the eighth verse, ‘him that imagineth to do evil, men will call an author of wickedness.’ In which words is further declared, that as folly causeth men to want preferment and praise, so it bringeth them to punishment and shame. If any, musing on mischief in his bed, or having a knavish wit—as we say in our English tongue—is cunning in finding out the ways of practising mischief, or skillful in the tricks of cozening and deceit, the well-affected people and upright judges will cry out upon him as a captain of mischief, and condemn him as a great offender. For as by frailty and error to transgress is a thing that is tolerable and may find pardon, so willingly and wittingly to do evil is a matter most worthy of blame and punishment. Thus much is taught more plainly and fully in the ninth verse, wherein is said, that ‘the wickedness of folly is sin, but a scorner is an abomination unto men.’ Wherein, by the wickedness of folly, the evil deed which is committed of simplicity or infirmity is meant. Such a deed is a sin, that is, a transgression of the law, seeing ignorance or infirmity excuseth not in the whole, but in part. ‘But a scorner (or a scorner’s wickedness) is an abomination unto men.’ For the evil deed or crime which is done of knowledge and pride, and continued in, is more than a sin—even an abominable filthiness,

which not only the Lord, but men, cannot but detest and abhor. And as concerning the scorner himself, who sinneth with a high hand, or scorneth all good instructions, he is to be shunned as a heathen or publican; yea, and sometimes as a toad or serpent.

Ver. 10. *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength shall be small.*

Ver. 11. *Deliver them that are drawn to death: for shouldst thou withdraw thyself from them who go down to the slaughter?*

Ver. 12. *If thou say, Behold, we knew not of it; shall not he who pondereth the hearts understand it? and doth not he know it who preserveth thy soul? doth not he also recompense every man according to his works?*

Every one is exhorted in these sentences, according to his place and power, by all lawful means to help the afflicted. Divers, when they see the innocent troubled or oppressed, are slack to succour them; yea, by reason of the rage or power of tyrants, they become faint-hearted, so that they are afraid to speak for them. If, saith the Spirit of God to every one that may by word or deed help the afflicted, thou carry thyself thus faintly, and neglectest to perform the duty of brotherly love, ‘in the day of adversity thy strength shall be small;’ that is, in the time of trouble thou shalt want both courage within thyself, and comfort without thee; for thou shalt find no friends to stand by thee, no, not in a righteous cause; or at the least, thou shalt find no other than faint and cold friendship in the world. Wherefore ‘deliver them that are drawn to death: for shouldst thou withdraw thyself from them that are drawn to the slaughter?’ That is to say, rescue by thy power if thou art a magistrate, or by all lawful means whatsoever thou art, such as, being innocent, are brought into danger of death. If any be justly troubled or condemned to die, he is not to be delivered. But if might oppress right, or violence be offered to the poor and afflicted, every one is bound to defend his neighbour from wrong, as much as in him lieth. ‘For shouldst thou withdraw thyself from them that go down to the slaughter?’ That is to say, Art thou to withhold thine help from preserving of the poor and innocent, who are laid down on the block to be slain, or drawn to the stake to be burned, from the stroke of the sword or flame of the fire? Let there-

fore judges and mighty men deliver the poor and the needy out of the hand of the wicked, as it is in the psalm, Ps. xcii. 4. The states of Judea delivered Jonathan from Saul's cruelty by their power, 1 Sam. xiv. 46; Esther saved the people of the Jews from destruction by the grace and favour which she had with the king, Esther viii. 4; and Daniel, by his wisdom and earnest suit, obtained delay of the bloody execution upon the wise men of Chaldea, Dan. ii. 15. Let every one by all lawful means in like manner defend all righteous causes and persons. But because divers are wont to plead excuses when they are called to this duty, therefore, in the twelfth verse, these are prevented and answered. 'If thou say, Behold, we knew not of it; shall not he who pondereth the hearts understand it, and doth not he know who preserveth thy soul? doth not he also recompense every man according to his works?' As if it were said, Now if thou seekest excuses, or pleadest ignorance, as that thou knowest not whether they be in trouble or no, or whether their cause be good or bad, or how to help them, shall not the searcher of the hearts perceive whether thou dissemblest or no? or shall not he who preserveth thee in safety and prosperity, to the end that thou mayest succour those that are in misery, consider thy dealing with thy poor brethren, and himself deal with thee according to thy desert?

Ver. 13. *My son, eat honey, for it is good; and the honeycomb, which will be sweet to the roof of thy mouth.*

Ver. 14. *So shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul, if thou shalt find it; and thine hope shall not be cut off.*

In the former of these two verses the Spirit of God calleth us to eat honey, not for that the matter is great whether we do so or no, but by the taste of this sweet creature to allure us to the study of wisdom, and to shew that this grace of God is as sweet to the soul as the honey or honeycomb is to the taste of the mouth. The doctrine of the word of God seemeth unto divers to be very bitter and unpleasant, by reason that it enjoineth hard duties to flesh and blood, and cannot be perceived by the natural man; but surely unto the spiritual man it is most sweet and comfortable, within whom it worketh knowledge and feeling of the joy of the

Holy Ghost. For whatsoever was written, that was written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope. This hope upholdeth us in this present life, and at the last in the world to come shall obtain the good things which it doth expect, as is taught in the latter end of the fourteenth verse. For when it is said, 'thine hope shall not be cut off,' hereby is meant, that although a wise man do not presently enjoy or taste the tree of life so greatly desired and longed for; yet seeing he trusteth and waiteth on the Lord, the time will come wherein he shall be made partaker of most happy peace, plenty, immortality, and glory; all which things are sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb. Thus wisdom in the effect is wholesome and delightsome, and in the end pleasant and full of comfort.

Ver. 15. *Lay not wait, O wicked man, at the house of the righteous; and spoil not his resting-place.*

Ver. 16. *For the just man falleth seven times, and riseth again: but the wicked rush into evil.*

A precept herein is given unto persecutors, or such as are enemies unto the godly, to stay themselves from annoying and pursuing of the innocent. As the prophet David testifieth in one of his psalms, Ps. xxxvii. 32, 'The wicked man watcheth for the just man, and seeketh to put him to death.' This being the custom of the wicked man, the Spirit of God here calleth to him as it were by name, and first willeth him not to practise any secret mischief against the righteous, nor to lurk in some corner, either to take him, or to get some advantage against him. Secondly, He chargeth him not to offer him any violence, nor to prey upon his goods, and namely, not to spoil or destroy his resting-place. There is great cause why the wicked man should let the just man alone, and not go about to disturb him when he is asleep, or to spoil his possessions. For, first, 'The just man falleth seven times, and riseth again;' that is to say, the innocent person is afflicted with many troubles, but in the end is delivered out of them all. And as he that falleth and riseth receiveth no great hurt, so he that is troubled and escapeth out of trouble fareth well enough. 'But the wicked rush into evil;' that is to say, the ungodly perish in adversity, being so overthrown therein that they never are able to recover themselves. They are



altogether like unto those miserable persons who, tumbling down a steep hill or a pair of stairs, so break their backs or their necks by a woeful and fearful downfall, that they never rise again. but lie grovelling, not being able to stir hand or foot. There is then great difference between the slips and stumbings of the godly, and the downfalls and dashings of the wicked.

Ver. 17. *Be not glad when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart rejoyce when he stumbleth.*

Ver. 18. *Lest in the eyes of the Lord, beholding it, it seem evil, and he turn his wrath from him upon thee.*

In the former sentences hath been taught that a just man may fall into many adversities, howbeit not so but that he may also rise again. In this is declared that when any man falleth into trouble, he that is his adversary is not to triumph in this respect. 'Be thou not glad when thine enemy falleth,' shew not any signs of mirth when thine adversary is afflicted, 'and let not thine heart rejoyce when he stumbleth.' Yea, be far off from conceiving any inward or secret joy when any mishap befalleth him. This precept may be thought to be contrary to the practice of the godly; for Moses and divers others of God's servants have rejoiced when their enemies have been destroyed. But indeed he and they did not so much triumph or delight in the misery of the wicked as in their own deliverance, neither were they glad of the destruction of their enemies, and<sup>1</sup> as God's glory did appear in the punishment of the ungodly. A man may with a pure intent to God's glory, and in a holy zeal, rejoyce at the overthrow of the enemies of God and his church, but he may not simply rejoyce at the fall of his adversary, nor uncharitably triumph over him with a gladness of heart arising from secret hatred. But why is this uncharitable and unholy joy to be taken heed of? 'Lest in the eyes of the Lord, beholding it, it seem evil, and he turn his wrath from him upon thee.' That is to say, first, Lest the Lord be offended and angry with thee for having and nourishing such an unkind and filthy affection in thine heart; for the Lord pondereth the spirits, and would have thee even to love thy very enemy, and therefore to pity him, and not rejoyce at his misery. Secondly, Lest the Lord for this thy sin lay the same affliction on thee which he

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'save', or 'but'?—ED.

doth on thine adversary, which would be smally to thy comfort. Indeed it oftentimes so falleth out, that he that is glad for the misery of his neighbour falleth himself into the same adversity. These last words, 'and he turn his wrath from him upon thee,' are not so to be understood as if that therefore a man were not to rejoyce at his enemy's fall, lest by so doing his good might be procured, to wit, the removing of the scourge that is upon him. But by this speech every one is warned to take heed of uncharitable rejoycing at the miseries of those that hate him, lest by this means he draw God's wrath and plague upon himself. This point therefore is well to be observed.

Ver. 19. *Fret not at those that are bent upon mischief, neither yet envy those that are wicked;*

Ver. 20. *For there shall be no latter part to the mischievous man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.*

First, We are willed herein not to be angry or offended at the prosperity of those that set themselves to hurt or oppress their neighbours; or the Hebrew word which is translated fret not, doth signify and note out wrathfulness or furiousness. Secondly, We are again warned not to envy the wicked, touching which matter much hath been spoken before, chap. xxiii. 17, also xiii. 8. Thirdly, We are moved not to fret at the mischievous tyrants and oppressors of this world, for this reason, to wit, because there shall be no latter part or end unto them. That is to say, no happiness nor salvation in the end; for as it is in the psalm, the end of the mischievous shall be cut off, Ps. xxxvii. In the latter part of his life, or at his death, the ungodly person is plagued with great evils and miseries. Last of all, we are taught that therefore the prosperity of the wicked is not to be envied, because their candle shall be put out; that is to say, their health, wealth, glory, and flourishing estate shall decay and be turned into misery; but this phrase hath also been spoken of before in this book.

Ver. 21. *My son, fear God and the king; and meddle not with them that make alterations;*

Ver. 22. *For their calamity shall suddenly arise; and who knoweth the destruction of them both?*

These two sentences are very precious, and worthy to be written in letters of gold. First, every one herein is exhorted in heart to reverence, and in deed

to obey. two great and mighty persons. The former person is God, who is worthily named in the first place. for that he is chiefly, wholly, and then only to be obeyed, when princes' wills cannot be done unless his will be transgressed. Wherefore they offend against this precept, and against the Lord, who either put into practice those commandments of men which are quite contrary to the laws of God, or, though they diligently observe the statutes of princes, yet neglect the duties which they owe unto the Lord, and reverence not nor worship his majesty. But the Lord is most mighty, and able to kill both body and soul, wherefore he especially is to be honoured. The king is also a mighty person, and the Lord's deputy on earth, for which cause, next unto God, in the Lord, and for the Lord, he is to be feared; for as we are to give unto God those things that are God's, so we are to give to Cæsar those things that are Cæsar's, Mat. xxii. 21. And this fear which we are to carry towards the king should shew itself in giving honour unto him, as the apostle Peter declareth when he saith, 'Fear God and honour the king,' 1 Peter ii. 13. Wherefore they greatly offend, who, as concerning the exercises of religion, give unto God that which is God's; but withal give not to princes that which is their due, and either refuse to pay tribute to them, or take up arms against them, or break their good laws, or will not submit themselves to their punishments, or seek to change or abolish their decrees and statutes. We are well warned in the latter part of the former of these two verses to take heed of such changers of God's laws and men's laws, whenas it is said, meddle not with them that make alterations; for by those that make such alterations are meant such as swerve from the holy laws of God concerning religion and Christian obedience, or from the wholesome laws of princes, touching policy or civil peace. Of this number are they whom the apostle calleth lawless people, and such as will not be subject, 1 Tim. i. 9. They that reject the vain traditions of man, or that seek to have corruptions purged out of the church, or any disorder amended by God's word, so that they seek this lawfully, discreetly, and peaceably, are not makers of innovations or alterations; but such as add to the word of God, or swerve therefrom, and such as rebel against princes, and seek to abolish

their good and godly laws, are those dangerous persons who, as here is taught, are in no case to be liked or followed after, but rather to be shunned and avoided. Great cause there is, as is shewed in the beginning of the latter verse, why such makers of alterations should not be meddled with. 'For their calamity or desolation doth suddenly arise.' The calamity here spoken of is some horrible plague or vengeance, which spoileth the goods, tormenteth the body, and vexeth the soul. A long time together the swervers from God's laws, and rebels against the Lord and their prince, are oftentimes spared. But in the end such a calamity as hath been mentioned riseth up against them, even when they say unto themselves, Peace, peace. It was long ere the flood came upon those that were disobedient in the days of Noah, but in the end it rose up on a sudden. The wicked cities were at last quickly subverted, though for a time they were with patience forborne; but when once a way was made for Lot to escape, the fire fell on the rest suddenly and most fearfully. Wherefore the desolation of the breakers of holy laws, whether enacted by the Lord or by princes, doth suddenly arise. And, as is added in the end of the latter verse, who knoweth the destruction of them both? to wit, of the Lord and of the king, for of them both mention was made before. As the wrath of them both is heavy, so it is speedy and secret. Their decrees are kept very close, the execution of them is sudden. The offender knoweth not the day of his apprehension or execution oftentimes, yea, this is concealed from all sorts of people. Jerusalem knew not the day of her visitation, and she was ignorant of the time of her destruction. No man knoweth when Christ Jesus will come to judgment, and who knoweth the hour wherein the Lord purposeth to send death unto him? Seeing, then, the power of the Lord and of the king is so great, seeing their wrath is so terrible, and seeing their vengeance is so swift, let every one fear God and the king, and take heed he be not in the number of the disobedient or rebellious.

Ver. 23. *Also these are the sayings of the wise. To have respect of persons in judgment is not good.*

David made not all those spiritual songs which are contained in the book of the Psalms; in like manner, neither did Solomon utter or write all the

parables which are set down in this book of the Proverbs. Thus much may be gathered out of the first part of this sentence, wherein is said, 'Also these are the sayings of the wise.' What wise men they were who spake the parables ensuing is not expressed. We are not to doubt but that they were led by God's Spirit, and were holy men of God, seeing otherwise neither could they have been wise, neither would they who gathered these sayings together have put them into the book of canonical Scripture. But let us consider these sayings, which are all very precious and excellent. The first of them is, 'To have respect of persons in judgment is not good.' This instruction accordeth with that commandment of the Lord in the law, 'Thou shalt not deal corruptly in any judgment; thou shalt not accept the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the rich,' Lev. xix. 15. But what is it to respect persons? To respect persons is so to regard anything which is beside the cause, or out of the matter in question, as thereby to be led aside and to be drawn to pervert justice, or to decline from the law. For example, if any for the wealth, or power, or misery of the party accusing or accused, punish the innocent or acquit the guilty, or if any in the same cause deal otherwise with one than with another by reason of favour, or friendship, or hatred, or some such sinister respect, he is a respecter of persons. Thus to respect persons is not good, for God hath forbidden this sin, and will punish the same.

Ver. 24. *Him that saith to the wicked man, Thou art righteous; the people will curse, the nation will abhor:*

Ver. 25. *But to them that rebuke him shall be pleasantness, and each good man's blessing shall fall upon them.*

Ver. 26. (The people) *will kiss the lips of him that answereth upright words.*

The duty of judges hath in part been touched in the verses going before, and now in these is more fully declared. First, it is said, that 'him who saith to the wicked man, Thou art righteous; the people will curse, the nations will abhor.' It is an abomination to the Lord, as before hath been taught in this book, to acquit the offender from blame, and to call evil good. It is also an odious thing unto

men, as herein is declared; for not one, but many, yea, all that love righteousness, will blame in speeches, and detest in their souls, that corrupt judge who pronounceth the guilty person innocent, and spareth the evil-doer. Indeed, well-disposed people will not easily break out into rash curses, neither will they proudly reproach the magistrates, though they see them fail in their duty. But nevertheless, such is the zeal that they bear to justice, that they cannot but find fault with them when they see them so grossly to offend, neither yet can they but call to the Lord for redress and revenge of such a wrong and injury as is done even to the whole commonwealth. On the contrary side, as is taught in the second place, 'To them that rebuke the wicked shall be pleasantness, and each good man's blessing shall be upon them.' In which words a reward is promised unto those who in speech reprove, or by punishment correct, the evil-doer. Unto them shall be pleasantness, that is, not a bitter curse, but sweet praise, not lowering looks, but favourable countenances; to conclude, not some evil plague, but some good comfort. Moreover, upon them shall fall each good man's blessings, that is, the prayer of well-affected people, who will say, God's blessing be on such a judge's heart, for he saveth the innocent, and revengeth the wicked. This blessing fell upon Job's head full often, who saith in the book of Holy Scripture which beareth his name, 'When the ear heard me, it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness unto me: that I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless, and him that had no help. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to rejoice,' Job xxix. 11, 12. To conclude, as is added in the last place, 'The people will kiss the lips of him that answereth upright things.' The kissing of the lips is a sign of love amongst us, and in old time it was also a token of reverence, Ps. ii. 12; Gen. xli. 40. Whereas then here it is said that the people will kiss the lips of him that answereth upright things, the meaning is, that they will exceedingly affect and singularly honour such a person. It may be the wicked will despise or smite such a one, but the godly will reverence and embrace him. Now he is said to answer upright things, who uttereth true, wise, and pro-

fitable speeches, or such sayings as are agreeable to equity and righteousness.

Ver. 27. *Prepare thy work without, and make ready thy things in the field; and afterward build thine house.*

This proverb teacheth us to proceed orderly in all our affairs, looking to things of great importance in the former place, and going about matters of less weight in the latter. This wisdom the very little bees do practise and shew us, who first get honey and bring it into their hives, and afterward make their seats and honeycombs. Against the golden rule here set down divers sorts of people offend, yea, all that take a preposterous course, whether in the matters of this life, or in those things that are spiritual. Some enter into the state of marriage before either they have wit, or have provided and gotten by their labour sufficient food or wealth to maintain them. Others lay out much on banquets, building, pastimes, and apparel, before they have a good stock, or large comings-in. Others meddle with hard points of controversy before they have learned the plain principles of religion. Others first, and especially, seek after the goods of this world, and in the second place, at their leisure, and very slowly, they follow after the kingdom of God. All these, all such are like unto them that set the cart before the horses, and offend against this excellent rule, that we are first to prepare our work without, and afterward to trim and raise up or enlarge our houses.

Ver. 28. *Be not a witness rashly against thy neighbour; and deceive not with thy lips.*

Ver. 29. *Say not, I will do to them as he hath done to me: I will recompense this man according to his work.*

We are taught herein how to behave ourselves toward our neighbours, yea, and toward our very enemies. We are not by any means to be rash or false witnesses against our neighbours, for that were plain injury; nor to deceive with our lips, for that were flattery. And as touching our enemies, we are not to say that we will do to them as they have done to us, for that were private revenge. We must not, therefore, hate them that hate us, as the pharisees taught, but we must do good even unto our adversaries, as our Saviour teacheth in the Gospel, Mat. v. 38. We are not to follow that evil which another

hath done, but simply and only to consider what we ought to do.

Ver. 30. *I passed by the field of the sluggard, and by the vineyard of the man destitute of understanding.*

Ver. 31. *And, lo, it was all grown over with thistles, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.*

Ver. 32. *Then I beheld, and considered it: I looked upon it, and received instruction.*

Ver. 33. *By a few sleeps, a few slumbers, a little folding of the hands in lying down:*

Ver. 34. *Both thy poverty cometh on thee as a speedy traveller, and thy necessity as an armed man.*

Whereas there is great slackness in our nature unto that which is good, the Spirit of the Lord laboureth in these verses to drive slothfulness out of us, and to stir us up to diligence. In the two first sentences a divine parable, shadowing out the effects of sluggishness, is propounded; in the three last, the same opened and applied. Whereas the wise king saith that he 'passed by the field of the sluggard, and by the vineyard of the man destitute of understanding;' he meaneth that in the thoughts of his mind he considered the estate of slothful persons, who have some good gifts or portions, which are unto them, as it were, their fields or vineyards. Whereas he addeth that, as concerning the field of the sluggard, 'It was grown over with thistles, and nettles had covered the face thereof;' and that, as touching the vineyard of the foolish man, 'The stone wall thereof was broken down;' he insinuateth that, by reason of negligence and want of forecast, evil things increase and good things decay in church and commonwealth, and in private families, and in all places and matters. If the soil of a man's ground be never so good, yet if it be not tilled and husbanded it bringeth forth no corn, but aboundeth with weeds; so likewise, if a vineyard be set with never so noble plants, or if the vines begin to bring forth pleasant grapes, yet if the hedge or wall be broken down, no good will come thereof, but either thieves will steal them, or wild beasts will devour them. In like manner, in all things there cometh no good, but much hurt, by idleness; for the which cause it is by all men to be avoided, and namely by husbandmen, of whom Solomon speaketh expressly in this place. Yet some are good husbands to the

world-ward, and even overtoil themselves with bodily labour, so that you shall see their grounds well stored, and all these outward things belonging to them very neat and well ordered. But even these commonly are of all others most careless concerning their souls, which yet they should look unto after a special sort, as being the best ground and most pleasant vineyards which they possess. To come to the application of the parable therein—first, Solomon sheweth that he gathered wisdom out of the folly of the sluggard; and secondly, he declareth the particular point of instruction which he learned, which was that slothfulness and folly are the mothers of poverty and misery. In that the wise king by other men's follies received instruction, we may observe that it is our duty, by our neighbours' deeds and sufferings, to wax daily more and more wary. But although we have seen many whose estate and stock hath decayed through negligence, and who have perished in their other sins, yet not one of us among a hundred can say in truth that he hath received due instruction hereby. That point of wisdom which the prudent king learned by his observation is set down in the two last verses, which are these: 'By a few sleeps, a few slumbers, a little folding of the hands together: both thy poverty cometh on thee as a speedy traveller, and thy necessity as an armed man.' In the former of which sentences the sluggard is very lively painted out unto us; for therein he is noted to be such a one whose eyes are not waking or open, but shut and sleeping; and again, whose hands are not reached out to work, but folded together. And as this drowsiness is in the flesh of the sluggard, so there is a love of ease even in his very soul, which desireth rest and delighteth therein above all measure. For although he hath played the lazy a great while, and slept much longer than was meet that he should, yet he desireth to enjoy his ease and sleep a little longer, and saith, 'A little slumber, a little folding of the hands together.' The temporal sluggard, who is negligent as touching the affairs of this life, is very loath to leave his bed and go to his work; but the spiritual sluggard, who is careless about the service of God, and obedience unto his commandments, is much more drowsy and loath to leave his sin, and to do that which the Lord willet. He counteth a little

servicing of God a great deal, but on the contrary side a great deal of wickedness but a little. Hence it cometh to pass that not only poverty cometh on both these sluggards suddenly, but that necessity beateeth them down like an armed man most cruelly. Such temporal poverty and necessity overtaketh and oppresseth the one as pinched the prodigal son on earth, when he was driven to eat the husks with the swine, Luke xv. 16, and as pined the rich man in hell when he could not obtain a drop of water, Luke xvi. 24. Again, such spiritual penury and need seizeth upon and overwhelmeth the other, as the Gospel noteth to have perplexed the foolish virgins when they wanted oil in their lamps, Mat. xxv. 1; and as our Saviour in the Revelation of St John upbraideth the angel of the church of Laodicea withal, when he speaketh thus unto him: 'Thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not how thou art wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked,' Rev. iii. 17. Indeed poverty laid on the elect for an exercise of their faith, or a trial of their obedience, is an estate not evil, nor altogether uncomfortable; but penury incurred by carelessness or idleness is a sore scourge of sin, and a burden intolerable, but especially the poverty and nakedness of the soul. Wherefore, to the end we may never feel this famine nor the other, and to the end we may abound with God's blessings both inward and outward, let us be diligent in using of all the good means which appertain to the welfare of our bodies or souls.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1. *These also are the parables of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah gathered together.*

Great was the care of the good king Hezekiah for the true worship of the Lord, who gave a notable charge to the people in his days that they should bring portions unto the priests and Levites, to the end they might strengthen themselves in the law of God. Wherefore it is not to be marvelled at that in the time of his reign, his men, that is, his servants and subjects, did collect out of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah, or some such book, the sentenecs

ensuing, which when they were culled out and gathered together, were by the priests or prophets authorised and inserted into the canonical Scripture.

*Ver. 2. The glory of God is to hide a matter: but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.*

Albeit the Lord knoweth and decreeth all things, yet he maketh not all his intents or decrees known, but concealeth many matters both from men and angels. 'It is a glory to the Lord to hide a matter,' in this sort. For, first, Herein he sheweth that there is none to whom he standeth bound to reveal his mind. Secondly, He declareth that he is wonderful patient, inasmuch as though he understandeth what great sins men commit, yet he carrieth himself as one that knew nothing thereof, nor were hasty to revenge the same. Last of all, He proveth himself to be infinitely wise, inasmuch as he hideth some points of his wisdom from all creatures, as being unable and unfit in themselves to conceive or comprehend the same. 'But the glory of kings is to search out the matter.' For although to inquire into a matter be a sign of ignorance, yet seeing princes are men, it is no shame unto them to search out that case they know not, as Job did, but rather a praise, inasmuch as they are rulers under God upon earth to ferret out the truth and to bring dark matters to light, Job xxix. 16.

*Ver. 3. The heavens in height, and the earth in deepness, and the king's heart cannot be searched out.*

Howsoever some there are who think that by their wisdom they have attained unto the just measure of the height of the heaven, and of the breadth, length, and depth of the earth, yet there is none that properly knoweth the same but God alone, for they are infinite. Now such unsearchable and infinite things as are the heaven and the earth in the forenamed respects, are also the hearts of princes, or at the least such they should be. For those governors whom the Lord lifteth up to the royal throne are by him commonly indned with an excellent spirit, and adorned with such gifts as for the most part are not to be found in private persons. If any princes, by reason that they have given themselves rather unto vanity than unto the study of wisdom, be not such, yet such they ought to be. For seeing they have to deal in great and weighty

matters, it is required of them that their wits, counsels, purposes, and determinations of matters be rare, profound, notable, and past the common reach.

*Ver. 4. Take away the dross from the silver, and there will proceed a vessel for the finer.*

*Ver. 5. Take away the wicked from the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.*

The comparison of dross, whereunto here the wicked are resembled, is usual in the Scripture, and very fit; for dross is a corrupt and unprofitable mixture, which is by fire to be consumed and separated from the pure metal. In like manner also the ungodly are corrupt and hurtful people, who therefore by a due severity are to be cut off and severed from the righteous. Now as the goldsmith purging the dross from the pure metal hath by this means the matter of a fine and perfect vessel ready prepared, which he by his art may easily frame and fashion into some excellent form; so the king cutting off evil-doers with meet severity, and especially removing from him evil counsellors, causeth by this means his kingdom to be the purer and surer to him, and his throne to appear the more glorious in the eyes of all. For the very nest of the wicked being broken and pulled down, and no other subjects but only such as are godly remaining, he shall both be free from the dangers of treason, and by all most dutifully obeyed and honoured.

*Ver. 6. Take not honour unto thyself before a king, and stand not in the place of great personages:*

*Ver. 7. For it is better that it be said unto thee, Come hither; than that thou be thrust down before a worthier person, which thing thine eyes do see.*

The admonition here given accordeth notably with that parable in the Gospel which our Saviour uttered upon occasion that he observed how some chose to themselves the chiefest rooms. The Holy Ghost in these sentences calleth every one from vain boasting and boldness, especially before princes, who by reason of their high places cannot abide pride, and by reason of the power wherewith they are armed, will not suffer it to go unpunished. 'Take not honour unto thyself before a king,' make not show of any bravery or excellency before a prince; 'and stand not in the place of great personages,' moreover, intrude not thyself into those rooms whereunto thou art not called, and which belong to men

of great account. 'For it is better that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, than that thou be thrust down before a worthier person, which thing, or whom thine eyes do see.' For it is a more comfortable and commendable thing that when thou seatest thyself in a low place, thou be called up to a higher, than that when thou hast placed thyself in a high room, a man of better degree or account coming in, thou beest caused to sit down and to give place unto him, thine eyes beholding him and thine own disgrace.

Ver. 8. *Go not forth hastily to sue any : consider what thou shalt do at the last, when thine enemy shall have put thee to shame.*

Ver. 9. *Debate thy matter with thy neighbour ; but reveal not the secret of another.*

Ver. 10. *Lest he that heareth blame thee, and thine infamy do not cease.*

As before the Spirit of God hath dissuaded us from pride, so now he willet us to take heed of contention, which vice bringeth shame as well as the other. 'Go not forth hastily to sue any.' Proceed not rashly in the pride of thine heart unto the court of justice. 'Consider what thou wilt do at the last, when thy neighbour shall have put thee to shame.' Weigh beforehand that thou canst not easily end the suit, nor escape punishment, when thy neighbour shall have proved thy cause to be bad, and shall once have gotten the upper hand. For it is not so easy a matter to end a quarrel as it is to begin it, nor so pleasant a thing to endure the trouble of the law, as to enter thereinto. The law is costly, as we say ; it putteth men to great charges, yea, it costeth many a one his life. Wherefore, rather 'debate thy matter with thy neighbour,' dispute the case with thy brother who hath offended thee, admonishing him between him and thee ; 'but reveal not the secrets of another.' As for the private and privy offence committed by thy neighbour, which is only known unto thyself, declare it not unto any, but rather conceal it, 'lest he that heareth blame thee ;' lest, instead of credit, which thou seekest after, thou procure unto thyself discredit from him unto whom thou tellest the tale, who hearing thee to blaze the infirmity of thy friend, will account thee to be a backbiter or talebearer ; 'and thine infamy do not cease.' And lest thy blot and stain be perpetual ; for nothing in

the minds of men remaineth so long as those things wherein they see any to have done amiss.

Ver. 11. *As a golden apple with pictures of silver, so is a word spoken filly.*

Gold of itself and by itself is precious and excellent, but when it is brought into some pretty form, as for example into the fashion of an apple or a cherry, and wrought about with fair and curious picture works, as with leaves or branches of silver, then it is much more comely and glorious. In like manner a sage or pithy sentence is in itself commendable and acceptable, but when it is uttered with a grace and in due place it becometh much more pleasant and forcible. Thus a speech that is true or prudent is of itself, as it were, a golden apple, but being graced with eloquence or any like ornament it excelleth, and seemeth like to a work of gold embroidered with pictures or fruiteries of silver.

Ver. 12. *As a golden earring and jewel of pearl, so is a wise reprovor to an obedient ear.*

A golden earring is a comely ornament of itself, whereunto if a jewel or pearl which is most precious be set and annexed, it becometh, by this addition, exceeding gracious and glorious ; for the precious stone causeth the golden ring to appear very acceptable and admirable. The wise reprovor or instructor who lovingly and seasonably telleth his neighbour of his fault or duty, may fitly be likened unto a jewel of pearl ; for he lighteneth and enricheth him that is instructed with knowledge and with the gifts of God's Holy Spirit. The attentive or obedient hearer, who desireth to increase in learning, and who receiveth the word of God with meekness and with a yielding thereunto, may also aptly be resembled to a golden earring ; for he is transformed from glory to glory, as the apostle speaketh, by the ministry and instruction of the prudent and learned teacher. Thus the wise tongue profiteth the obedient ear, and the obedient ear well suiteth and willingly hearkeneth unto the prudent tongue.

Ver. 13. *As the cold of the snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger unto those that send him ; for he restoreth his master's soul.*

The ancient people in the hot countries used to cool their drink in summer with snow water, which to that end they reserved. It should not then seem strange that here mention is made of snow in har-

vest, which if at that time it should fall on the ground it would be unseasonable and hurtful thereunto, but the water thereof, which is most cold, put into drink to cool the same, is a great refreshing unto those that labour hotly in harvest work. Now unto snow water reserved and thus applied is a speedy and trusty messenger very fitly here resembled; for by his good news he greatly reviveth the heavy and longing minds of those who sent him about their business. Wherefore let messengers labour with all care, and hasten with all speed, to despatch their business happily and quickly, to the end they may by so doing comfort those who sent them, and deliver them out of their desires and fears.

Ver. 14. *As clouds and wind without rain, so is the man who boasteth of a false gift.*

Such are now painted out who make a show of that which they have not, nor perform. Like 'as clouds and wind without rain' not only are barren and without water, but making show of showers which they have not nor pour down, deceive oftentimes the husbandman's expectation and grieve his heart; so hypocrites and vain promisers of liberality are not only without grace and good works, but by their shows of holiness and promises of bounty offend and delude those who hoped for some goodness or goods from them.

Ver. 15. *By meekness a prince is appeased, and a soft tongue breaketh the bones.*

The wrath of a mighty man is fiercer and heavier than is the anger of a private person; yet by meekness, that is, by silence and forbearing, a prince is appeased, a great ruler is pacified, who, when he seeth that his subject doth not rebel nor murmur against him, remitteth his fury. 'And a soft tongue breaketh the bones.' That is to say, a gentle and lowly speech overcometh stout and hard minds, which otherwise would not yield. We do think by stubbornness and roughness to prevail, and to cause those that set themselves against us to yield unto us; but the wisdom of God teacheth us here a better course, and willeth us to labour by gentleness to win men's good-will, and especially by fair speech to pacify the minds of such as are in high places. Albeit the Ephraimites, of whom mention is made in the book of Judges, did mightily contend with

Gideon, for that he called them not when he went out against the Midianites, yet whenas they heard him give so soft an answer as that he therein preferred their exploits far above his own, then after this word, as the Scripture sheweth, their wrathful spirit ceased and abated, Judges viii. 1, &c. Likewise, although David had vowed to slay Nabal and all that belonged to him, yet when he considered the mild disposition, and heard the humble oration of Abigail, he was entreated, and blessed both the Lord for her, and her for giving him so wise counsel, 1 Sam. xxv.

Ver. 16. *When thou findest honey, eat that which is sufficient for thee: lest being filled therewith, thou vomit it up.*

Ver. 17. *Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house: lest being filled with thee, he hate thee.*

A measure is to be kept in all things, even in those that are sweetest. Too much of everything is bitter, yea, even too much of honey; for though nothing is sweeter than honey, if it be moderately taken, yet if any eat too much thereof, it causeth loathing and casting. In like manner, if any shall, without measure or any stay, bathe himself in the sweet delights of this world whatsoever, he shall both lose his pleasure and procure pain to himself. To come more particularly to the case here set down, too often frequenting of a friend's house or table is not good. Wherefore, when thou hast found a table or house like in sweetness unto honey, haunt it not without all modesty, lest thy friend be weary of such a daily guest; but rarely and sparingly resort thereunto, that so thou mayest always be welcome and acceptable. It is a great fault among many, that when they have found a kind and sweet friend, they care not how they overlay him or abuse his courtesy. But, as we say in our common proverbs, it is not good to take too much of a frank horse.

Ver. 18. *As a hammer, and a sword, and a sharp arrow: so is that man that beareth false witness against his neighbour.*

To express the greatness of the sin of false witness-bearing, the Holy Ghost resembleth it to three instruments of death. The first is a hammer, or, as some take the word, a club, which breaketh hard things in pieces, and wherewith many a man's brains is knocked out. The second is a sword, which



divideth those things that cleave fast together, and wherewith the throat is sometimes cut in sunder. The third is a sharp arrow, which pierceth deeply, and wherewith the heart is oftentimes wounded. By these three instruments commonly man hurteth man, unto all which the false tongue is here compared, for that it worketh much hurt and is a deadly mischief. He that beareth false witness overthroweth the estate of his neighbour, who is wrongfully accused, taketh away his life, and pierceth his heart with inward grief.

Ver. 19. *As a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint: so is trust in one that is unfaithful in the day of trouble.*

It is good for every man to try before he trust, lest, if he put confidence in a false friend, he be deceived and disappointed in the time of necessity. A broken tooth faileth and paineth him who goeth about to chew his meat. Again, a foot out of joint tormenteth and disappointeth him who setteth it on the ground to go. Neither can the broken tooth, nor the foot out of joint, do his office, but both of them are unprofitable. Such a thing is the hope that is reposed in a friend who starteth aside when a man hath need of him; it cannot comfort or help him in whom it is, but rather it grieveth him, and maketh him ashamed. When it cometh to the pinch, then this hope faileth, by reason that he faileth in whom it was placed. Job thought very well of his friends in the time of his prosperity, but in his adversity his hope was as a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint; for it departed from him, and was turned into indignation. Let us, then, not trust every man's promise, nor put confidence in vain persons.

Ver. 20. *As he that putteth on a garment in the cold season, or vinegar on nitre: so is he that singeth songs to a sad heart.*

Great is the force of music, but especially of singing. It is here expressed, as it seemeth, by two comparisons—the one, of a garment put on in the cold season; the other, of vinegar poured upon nitre. That a garment put upon the naked body in the cold season keepeth off the sharpness of the weather and warmeth the loins, all men do know; but what the force of vinegar poured on nitre is, or what nitre is, it is not so well by the most under-

stood. To make this point, therefore, the plainer, nitre is a kind of earth in Judea and Egypt, as Belonius writeth, made hard by the sun, white in colour, and bitter in taste. It is neither saltpetre, nor salt, nor chalk, as some have imagined, but such a kind of earth as hath been spoken of. Now this nitre is sometimes so by heat compacted together, as that it hath the hardness of a very stone; but, as a learned philosopher writeth, if vinegar be put upon the driest and hardest nitre that may be, by reason of the coldness and piercing nature thereof, it looseth and dissolveth the same. Now, even as a garment warmeth the body, and vinegar dissolveth the hard nitre, so a sweet singer, by his delightful ditty and pleasant voice, cheereth up the pensive soul, and driveth sorrow out of it. Hence it was that David played on his harp when the evil spirit came upon Saul; hence also it was that the prophets, who knew what were the best remedies against griefs, did set down so many spiritual songs and psalms in writing for the perpetual consolation of afflicted hearts. Indeed, some that are in bitter grief are rather vexed than eased by singing of songs or playing upon instruments of music; but music properly hath this force, and ordinarily this effect, even to assuage and pacify the passions of the pensive mind.

Ver. 21. *If thine enemy hunger, feed him with bread; and if he thirst, give him water to drink.*

Ver. 22. *For thou shalt heap as it were burning coals upon his head, and the Lord will recompense thee.*

We are not to hate our enemies, as the pharisees taught, but to love them, as our Saviour in the Gospel willeth us to do. If this love be soundly and plentifully in us, then, according to the commandment of the Lord given in the law, we will help our enemy's ass and ox if we see them in any danger or trouble. Then also, according to the counsel and charge here given, if our enemy hunger we will feed him, and if he thirst we will give him drink; that is to say, we will not suffer him to perish, but rather nourish him, yea, minister not one alone, but many benefits unto him according to his necessity. Great cause there is, saith the Spirit of God to every man, why thou shouldst be liberal in thy gifts and benefits unto thy very adversary. 'For thou shalt heap

as it were burning coals upon his head; and the Lord will recompense thee.' Either certain punishments or benefits must here of necessity, and by the judgment of the learned, be meant by the borrowed speech of burning coals. Now it is not likely that the Holy Ghost would will us to do good to our enemies that the greater vengeance may fall upon them, or that matter of their destruction may be ministered unto them; neither doth this sense agree with the latter part of this sentence, wherein it is said, 'and the Lord shall recompense thee.' Wherefore, on the contrary side, by heaping of coals of fire, the bestowing of the benefits in liberal manner is understood, which bounty the Lord will reward. Now we know that if a coal or two of fire be laid on the hearth of the chimney below, he that is cold cannot be wholly warmed, or receive much good thereby; but if one basketful be poured on the fire after another, so that the coals are heaped up to the mantel-tree, or are as high as his head that fain would warm him, then he waxeth thoroughly hot and beginneth even to burn. It seemeth then that by this borrowed speech is meant, that if a man shall be very bountiful even unto his enemy, and heap upon him one good turn after another, this will cause his affection, which before was cold, to burn within him, and peradventure will turn him to become a friend instead of a foe. Thus dealt David with Saul, who spared his life when he might have slain him, and only cut off a piece of his coat, when he might as easily have cut off his head; which kindness of his so affected Saul, and inflamed him to mutual love when he knew of it, that he called him sou, and prayed to the Lord to recompense unto him that goodness which he had shewed, 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. Let us then be ready to overcome evil with good, yea, and to bestow great benefits upon our very enemies if need shall require. So doing we shall be no losers; but although our enemies remain obstinate, or be not able to requite us, yet, as is affirmed in the last words of this sentence, the Lord, who commandeth us to love our enemies, will repay back our cost and charges.

Ver. 23. *As the north-west wind engendereth rain, so doth the whispering tongue a lowering look.*

Oftentimes it falleth out that one friend or neighbour looketh very sourly on the other, though he

speak never a word, nor say that he is offended. One cause of this frowning among the people of the world is here declared to be the whispering tongue, which privily telleth tales, and reporteth false slanders. This tongue is fitly resembled to the north-west wind, which in Judea, by reason of the situation of the great sea, (which there was northward,) engendered rain, and gathered the clouds together. For the sly or backbiting tongue causeth sadness in their countenances, and tears in their eyes, who therewith are bitten. Daily experience proveth this saying to be true.

Ver. 24. *Better it is to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a covetous woman in a wide house.*

This sentence having been before at large expounded, is not here again to be handled. See chap. ii. 9.

Ver. 25. *As cold waters are to a weary soul, so is a good hearing out of a far country.*

As fame is a great evil, so it is a great good thing. All men know that cool waters quench the thirst and restore the strength of the feeble and weary traveller, who being in a great heat, is ready to faint for want of drink; in like manner all they that a long time wait to hear some good news out of those places where their affairs or friends are, do feel by experience, that by the glad tidings which are brought unto them they are exceedingly refreshed and revived. If good news be brought but from a place that is near, it is very comfortable; but when a messenger bringeth a joyful report out of a far country he is most welcome and acceptable, for that he hath very long and very earnestly been looked for and desired.

Ver. 26. *As a well troubled with the foot, or a spring that is corrupted, so is a righteous man cast down before the wicked.*

When the wicked bear rule, and the just are punished, then all things are turned up and down, and the fairest things in the world defaced. The virtuous and innocent should indeed always be praised and honoured, but so it cometh to pass many times in many places that the wicked bear the sway and oppress the righteous. The righteous man thus oppressed or cast down before the wicked, that is, defaced, imprisoned, or condemned by him, 'is as a well troubled with the foot, or a spring that is cor-

rupted.' For as the well troubled with the foot is muddy and unfit to be used, or as the spring that is corrupted by the casting of some filthy thing thereinto by this means loseth his grace and clearness, so the innocent person oppressed cannot do that good which otherwise he would, and hath not that dignity which it is meet he should have.

Ver. 27. *To eat too much honey is not good : so the searching of glory is not glory.*

Honey is a representation of things that are sweet and excellent. If honey be sparingly tasted it delighteth and much profiteth ; but if too much of it be eaten it engendereth choler, and worketh death. For thereby the life is wounded, whereby the mouth is delighted. In like manner the seeking after excellent things whatsoever, meant here by glory or glories, in the plural number, is good ; but the searching after them above measure is dangerous and deadly. Too much seeking for praise, too greedy hunting for preferment, too continual studying for knowledge, is not good ; but especially too curious searching of the majesty of the Godhead is dangerous ; for he that so searcheth his majesty shall be oppressed with his glory. This honey bursteth the sense of the searcher, as one saith very well, whilst it is not therein contained.

Ver. 28. *As a city broken down without a wall, so is every one that hath not power over his spirit.*

This holy proverb declareth that every one who is unstaid of his affections is as a city unfenced or battered down. 'A city broken down without a wall' is not able to resist any assault, but lieth open to the spoil ; even so the man that letteth the bridle loose to his affections, and is not fenced with the wall of the fear of God, lieth open to the temptations of Satan and the wicked, in such sort as that they will easily overcome him. To come to particulars ; if any be angry or given to wrath, will he not quickly be led captive to revile and to commit murder ? If the affection of covetousness possess any, will he not easily be drawn to deceive and steal ? The like is to be said of all the passions of the mind, which if a man cannot bridle or govern, they will carry him headlong with violence into all mischief and misery, as wild and fierce horses oftentimes run away with an unguided coach or waggon.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

Ver. 1. *As snow agreeth not to summer, or rain to harvest, so neither doth honour (beseem) a fool.*

Honour, that is say, praise or preferment, is not to be given to a fool. that is to say, to an ignorant or a wicked person, because it is the reward of wisdom and virtue. It is as unfit for a fool as the snow is unfit for summer, or rain for harvest, that is to say, it is most unfit ; for snow is not agreeable unto summer, seeing through the extreme coldness thereof it hindereth the ripening of the corn ; likewise rain is not agreeable to harvest, forasmuch as through the moistness thereof it hindereth the inning of the fruits of the earth. Honour is unfit for a fool in two respects especially : the one, for that punishment is properly due unto him ; the other, for that he abuseth his authority, be it civil or ecclesiastical, unto the hurt of those that are subject unto him.

Ver. 2. *As the sparrow that wandereth, (or bent to wander,) or the swallow that flieth, so the curse that is causeless will not come.*

The undeserved curses and rash railings of the wicked neither can do any harm, neither are to be regarded. They are like the sparrows, that rove up and down without staying in any place, or like the swallows, who without resting their feet on the ground continually beat the air with weary wing ; for in like manner causeless curses and rash censures fall not upon the innocent person, nor take effect, but vanish and come to nothing. The consideration hereof may be a great comfort unto all those who for well-doing are ill spoken of or wrongfully censured by those that are in authority.

Ver. 3. *Unto the horse belongeth a whip, to the ass a bridle, and a rod to the fool's back.*

The witless and wicked must not only be instructed by words, but corrected by stripes. 'Unto the horse belongeth a whip ;' for the horse that is in the cart will not draw swiftly enough, unless he be now and then remembered and quickened with smarting lashes. 'To the ass a bridle' appertaineth ; for this simple creature, when he carrieth a man on his back, would go out of the right way very often, unless he were by him guided and pulled back by a

bit. 'A rod is meet for the fool's back,' for two causes: the one is to stir him on forward unto virtue; the other, to restrain him from error and wickedness.

Ver. 4. *Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also become like unto him.*

Ver. 5. *Answer a fool unto his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.*

These two sentences may seem at the first blush to be contrary; for therein we are willed to answer a fool, and again not to answer a fool. But this knot will easily be loosed if it be observed that there are two sorts of answers, the one in folly, the other unto folly. A fool is not to be answered in his folly, or according to his folly, that is to say, in such vanity as he useth, or after such a raging manner as he speaketh. The reason is, 'lest thou become like unto him;' that is to say, lest either by following his example, or by incurring the opinion or blame of folly, thou hurt thyself. A fool is to be answered unto his folly; that is to say, a witless or wicked man is by reasons to be confuted, and by reproofs that are wise to be bridled. The reason is, 'lest he be wise in his own eyes;' that is to say, lest conceiving error to be truth he remain ignorant, or imagining his speech to be very excellent, he wax proud.

Ver. 6. *As he that cutteth his feet, so he receiveth hurt that sendeth messages by a fool.*

This proverb warneth every one to take heed unto whom he committeth his affairs or errands. He that cutteth his feet cannot happily go on forward in his journey, nor be at rest in any place; even so he that sendeth messages by a fool cannot be at quiet, nor have good success in his affairs. For committing his errands to one that cannot carry them without forgetfulness, or utter them without rashness, he shall have his matters either not done, or ill done. Moreover, the messenger's faults will be imputed to him that sent him, and many suspicions or inconveniences will hereby arise.

Ver. 7. *As the legs of the tame man are lifted up: so is a parable in a fool's mouth.*

The person that speaketh a sentence greatly graceth or disgraceth the same. A fool is fitly in this verse resembled unto a lame man; for every fool halteth in his understanding or behaviour. The

words uttered by a fool are also aptly compared unto the lame man's legs; for his legs are not only unequal or uncomely, but withered and feeble. Such are the speeches of the simple-witted and of the ungodly person; for in his month they are effeminated, as one speaketh, losing their grace and force. By reason that he is a fool, he either misapplieth his parable, or staineth it with the blot of his ungodly life and dealing.

Ver. 8. *As he that bindeth a stone into a sling, so doth he that giveth honour to a fool.*

It is not only an unmeet, but a hurtful thing, to promote or help forward the unworthy unto any dignity or office; for this is all one as if a man should put a sword into a madman's hand. For let the wicked have power joined to their will, and they will greatly molest such as are under them. He that bindeth a stone into a sling is a hand to help forward the hurt which may fall out by the rash casting of the same. Even so he that preferreth an unfit person unto any office in the church or the commonwealth is an occasion of much harm, which, by the evil government of the fool, redoundeth to many; for such as are foolish governors defend evil causes, receive bribes given to corrupt justice, discountenance the good, encourage the wicked, and do many other things which are very grievous and hurtful to the poor people. Wherefore neither are civil magistrates to be chosen by citizens, as commonly they are, only by years and wealth, without regard of virtue or wisdom; neither are unlearned or ungodly ministers to be presented by patrons to ecclesiastical livings, but only such as are worthy. A principal cause of many disorders in church and commonwealth is, that many are in dignity who either are void of such understanding as they ought to have, or else are given unto gross vices mubeseeming their calling, and hurtful to those that are under them.

Ver. 9. *As a thorn is lifted up in the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.*

The ungodly abuse their places unto which they are advanced, and those graces wherewith they are indued. The fool may very fitly be compared unto the drunkard; for as the drunkard wanteth the use of his reason, so a fool is void of discretion. A

parable in a fool's mouth may also very well be likened to a thorn lifted up in the hand of a drunkard; for a thorn in the hand of a drunkard is either by him ridiculously tossed up and down, or dangerously applied to the hurt of all that are near him, whom he useth to strike or prick with the same, not knowing nor caring what he doth. After the same manner, the vain and wicked person either uttereth some excellent sentence so absurdly that he maketh all that are present laugh, or misapplieth certain true sayings so corruptly and mischievously that therewith he vexeth all those that are in his company. Thus, as the drunken man doth much hurt with his thorn, or as the madman sorely woundeth those that come by him with the sword in his hand, so the foolish man, instead of using his gifts aright, abuseth the same, and instead of doing good with his speeches, rather doth great hurt therewith. Wherefore also better is the ignorant fool, who for want of knowledge hath no parable in his mouth, than the malicious fool, who having wit and utterance at will, abuseth the parable of his mouth; for he being drunk with anger, or with pride, or with envy, or with some suchlike affection, abuseth good words, yea, sometimes God's word, God's church, and God's people, and shooteth his bolts against the truth and against uprightness, betraying the malice of his heart and the darkness of his mind. There can scant be greater grief or a more intolerable burden than to hear the unsavoury and unsanctified speeches or invectives of such a witless and wicked fool.

Ver. 10. *A mighty man molesteth all, and both hireth the fool, and hireth those that pass by.*

The potentates of this world, if they be not sanctified by God's grace, do by so much the greater hurt, by how much their wealth or power doth exceed. 'A mighty man molesteth all;' that is to say, a great potentate doth much hurt unto all sorts of people by undermining or oppressing them. And to the end that he may the sooner accomplish his mischief, he both hireth the fool and hireth all that pass by, that is to say, he admitteth into his house, and setteth about his business, both the ungodly person, and every one without choice who he meeteth with; that is, great ones of this world both annoy all about them, and hire into their service both tag

and rag, the experience of the times wherein we live too plainly declareth.

Ver. 11. *As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool repeateth his folly.*

It is as foul and filthy a matter for a man to return to wickedness left for a season, as it is for a dog to lick up the vomit which once he hath cast out. Some sinners are like dogs in barking, some in biting, some in other properties; but the backslider is like them in their most beastly quality, even in taking up their vomit. To make this matter plainer, the backslider may be very fitly likened to a dog in his nature, in his vomiting, and in his taking up of his filthiness. The dog is by nature of all creatures the vilest, so he that returneth to folly is of all men most abominable. The dog, feeling his stomach overcharged, goeth to the grass, and casteth up that which troubleth him; in like manner the revolter, feeling his conscience burdened with sin, tasteth the good word of God, and being moved therewith, layeth aside his iniquity for a season. Last of all, the dog, being hungry and delighted with filthy things, returneth to his vomit, and taking up that again as good, which before he cast out as evil, feedeth himself with his own filthiness. Even so the backslider, being tempted afresh of his own concupiscence, and taking pleasure in most vile perverseness, falleth back to his old evil course, and is again entangled in his first uncleanness. Thus the true proverb befalleth the wicked revolter, as the apostle Peter speaketh, 'A dog returneth to his vomit, and the sow that hath been washed to her wallowing in the mire,' 2 Peter ii. 12, 22.

Ver. 12. *Hast thou seen a man wise in his own eyes? there is more hope of a fool than of him.*

That person who is wise in his own conceit may worthily bear away the bell from all the fools in the world. 'Hast thou seen a man wise in his own eyes?' Hast thou marked any who, being simple or full of infirmities, yet imagineth himself to be prudent and very whole? 'There is more hope of a fool than of him.' It is likely that he who is ignorant, or of a dissolute life, will sooner be brought to knowledge and repentance than such a one; for the proud fool and the scorner, that esteemeth highly of his own wisdom, and justifieth himself, will not hearken to the counsel of the learned, neither yet will acknowledge or lay aside his sin.

Ver. 13. *The slothful man saith, A young lion is in the way; an huge lion is in the streets.*

This sentence hath been at large before expounded; only here it is to be observed that the sluggard pleadeth sundry and great dangers, unto the excusing of his idleness. Read chap. xxii. 13.

Ver. 14. *As the door turneth upon the hinges, so doth the slothful man upon his bed.*

The sluggard loveth to lie long soaking in his bed. Many a slothful body, whether he sleepeth or no, keepeth in his feathered nest until the morning be well spent. Such a one may be well compared unto the door that turneth upon the hinges; for as the door is turned on the hinges in such sort as that sometimes it is moved to one side, sometimes to another, and yet always remaineth unremoved from the hinges, so the sluggard, even when he sleepeth not, nor needeth to lie a-bed any longer, rolleth in his bed sometimes to this side, sometimes to that, often purposing to rise, but yet still taking his ease.

Ver. 15. *The slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom; and it wearieth him to put it to his mouth again.*

This sentence having been before expounded, is not again to be handled in this place. Read chap. xix. 24.

Ver. 16. *The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men that return sage counsel.*

Of all slothful people, divers sorts whereof have been rehearsed, the conceited sluggard doth most dote. For though he be the veriest dolt in the world, yet he is wiser, not in deed, but in the eyes of his own imagination, not only than a few of those learned clerks or counsellors, but than seven of them, that is, than many of them, who return sage counsel, that is to say, give prudent answers to those that ask their advice, or are able to render a reason for all that they say. That sluggards have such a fond and proud conceit of their own wisdom, may appear both by their dealings and by their sayings. By their dealings, in that they come not to the learned to be instructed, belike imagiuing themselves to be as skilful as they, and in that they hide their talents, belike counting them fools which live not at ease as they do, but take great pains. By their sayings, in that they either speak against all learning, as if that none were wise but unlearned fools, or sharply and tauntingly censure and dispraise the

works of other men, as if they themselves could do things far more praiseworthy, when yet either they cannot for want of learning, or will not, by reason they love ease too well, perform any such matters.

Ver. 17. *He that, passing by, busieth himself in strife that concerneth him not, is as one that taketh a dog by the ears.*

Intermeddling in other folk's matters, or taking part in any contentions, is not only a vice unbecoming every true worshipper of God, but hurtful and dangerous. For as he which taketh a dog by the ears, who cannot abide to be touched in that part, causeth him to bark or to bite him, so he that meddleth in another man's quarrel provoketh him to rail on him, or to do him a mischief, and shall hereby receive some hurt unto himself. Nevertheless, he who so far only meddleth in the quarrels of other men that he goeth about to set at peace those that are at discord, is not like to one that taketh a dog by the ears, but like one that seeketh to still him by offering him a morsel of bread. Likewise the magistrate, who, being in authority, in the zeal of justice rebuketh or punisheth the party that offereth injury, is not like to him that taketh a dog by the ears, but to him that driveth him away with a staff, to the end he may do no hurt.

Ver. 18. *As he who casting firebrands, arrows, and deadly things, hideth himself,*

Ver. 19. *So dealeth he who deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am I not in jest.*

Hurtful jesting is not only unseemly, but a kind of secret persecution, Eph. v. 4, Gal. iv. 29, or, as an ancient father speaketh, a sword anointed with honey. Such a one as deceiveth his neighbour and saith, Am I not in sport, is here very fitly resembled to a man who, doing much hurt by sword or fire, or any like means, doth hide himself, that he may not seem to have done any such thing. For as this bad man, or madman, as some expound this sentence, practiseth great mischief, but so closely and under some such colour, that, if he be charged with any matter, he cannot easily be convicted thereof, but will easily deny it; so the deceitful jester doth those deeds, or uttereth those words, which hurt his friend, but covereth himself so under the excuse of sport and pastime, that if any complaint be made he will say, I did it but in jest. It is a property of the

ungodly, as the prophet sheweth in the psalm, Ps. xi. 2, to bend his bow and to put the arrow into the string, to shoot at those in the dark that are of upright heart. Wherefore the hurting of any of the faithful in close and secret manner, and by way of jesting, should be far off from all that fear the Lord. No man, be he never so low in degree, can abide himself to be scorned or derided, much less can any in dignity or pre-eminence, whose places and very faces are to be revered and honoured. Undoubtedly Job was the patientest man that ever lived upon the earth, Job xxx. ; but although he bare with a quiet spirit the loss of his goods, his servants, and his children, yet this intolerable burden he could not bear, that those that were younger than he did jest at him. How is it possible then that any of less patience than Job, and in greater prosperity than he was at that time, should endure the hurt of piercing and fiery scoffs, or pass by the offence of most offensive jesting? Quipping and flouting is counted the flower and grace of men's speech, and especially of table talk; but the hurt that cometh by this flower is as bitter as wormwood, and the disgrace which this grace casteth upon men is fouler than any dirt of the street.

Ver. 20. *Without wood the fire is quenched: and without a whisperer, strife ceaseth.*

Even as the fire is nourished by the wood, so commonly strife is nourished by evil tongues. Wherefore, if any would have contention to cease, he must take away backbiters, who are the causers and maintainers thereof; for if the cause be removed, the effect will cease. Now strife is here fitly resembled unto fire; for as fire consumeth all things, so doth contention. The whisperer is no less fitly resembled unto wood; for as wood is the matter and maintenance of fire, so the words of the whisperer are the matter and the nourishment of strife. By reason that whisperers are suffered to remain in church and commonwealth, it cometh to pass that therein contentions are not quieted, but increased; for by reason that some or other go about with tales, reporting as well that which is intrne as that which is true, such as otherwise are of gentle natures, and would embrace peace, are incensed and drawn to continue strife and anger.

Ver. 21. *As the dead coal is to (kindle) the burning*

*coals, and wood the fire; so a contentious person is to kindle strife.*

The means whereby strife may be appeased is the removing of the whisperer, as hath been taught in the former sentence. The root from whence contention ariseth, and the poison whereby it spreadeth further and further, is the contentious person, as here is declared. For here is taught, that as the dead coals being put to the burning coals increase the heat and the flame thereof, and as wood being added to the fire keepeth it in, and causeth it to wax greater and greater, so the wrathful and quarrelsome person causeth a little quarrel to grow to a great broil, and maketh the variance begun even hotter and hotter. He is called a contentious person in this place, who is either very hasty or a busybody, and ready to strive about every trifling matter. Wherefore, according to the counsel of the apostle to the Hebrews, we are to take heed lest any root of bitterness, that is to say, any author of contention, springing up, many be infected and troubled, Heb. xii. 15.

Ver. 22. *The words of the whisperer are flatterings: they go down into the bowels of the belly.*

This verse hath been before expounded, for which cause it is not again to be handled. Read chap. xviii. 8.

Ver. 23. *As silver dross overlaid upon an earthen pot, so are fawning lips and an evil heart.*

All is not gold that glitters, as we are wont to say in our common proverb. Fawning lips are here fitly likened unto silver dross; for as silver dross seemeth to be that which it is not, and to be more precious metal than indeed it is, so flattering lips seem friendly when they are not, and carry with them a show of that love whereof the heart is void. Wherefore, as before in this book, it hath been affirmed most truly that the tongue of the righteous is as fine silver, so here the lips of the dissembler are most rightly resembled unto dross. The evil heart of the hypocrite is no less fitly compared to an earthen pot; for as before hath been taught, the heart of the wicked is little worth. It is an earthen vessel, which containeth in it only earthly cogitations and affections, and which is very base and vile. And although the glozing and glorious speeches which are uttered by the flatterer do cover and hide from

the simple for the time the corruption of the false and dissembling heart, yet they make it never a whit better or more precious, but rather prove it to be the more abominable and mischievous. For it is as a vessel fair without and foul within, or as a painted sepulchre, that outwardly appeareth glorious unto men, but inwardly is full of dead bones and rottenness.

Ver. 24. *He that beareth hatred will counterfeit with his lips, but within him he layeth up deceit;*

Ver. 25. *When he shall shew his voice favourable, trust him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart.*

Ver. 26. *He will cover hatred by deceit, but his maliciousness shall be discovered in the congregation.*

In the first of these sentences, the property of him that hateth his brother is shewed to be, that he will utter fair words when he is devising of some mischief. This is a devilish quality, covertly to go about all things that may tend to the destruction of another; nevertheless, it is a vice which is very common in these days, wherein we have great cause to cry out with the prophet, 'Help Lord; for the good man faileth, and the faithful are departed from among the sons of men. They speak vanity one unto another; they speak with a lip of flattery, with a double heart,' Ps. xii. 1. But howsoever it is the custom of the greatest number thus to counterfeit with the lips, when in their hearts they lay up deceit, yet the godly are to take a quite contrary course, following the exhortation of the apostle, 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue only, but in deed and truth,' 1 John iii. 18. In the second of these verses warning is given to every one, then especially to take heed of such as carry secret hatred within them when they shall make show of greatest love or kindness; for it is said, 'When he shall shew his voice favourable, trust him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart.' The meaning of this sentence cannot, as seemeth unto me, be better expressed by any means, than by setting down like admonitions unto that which here is given out of the book of the son of Sirach, wherein many notable and most profitable instructions are contained. 'Trust not,' saith he, 'thine enemy at any time; for like as iron rusteth, so doth his wickedness. And though he make much

crouching and kneeling, yet advise thyself and beware of him, and thou shalt be to him as one that wipeth a glass; and thou shalt know that all his rust hath not been well wiped away. Set him not by thee, lest he destroy thee, and stand in thy place. Neither set him at thy right hand, lest he seek thy room, and thou at the last remember my words and be pricked with my sayings,' Eccus. xii. 10, 12, &c. And he added in the same chapter, a little while after, ver. 16, these most true and excellent sayings touching the same matter: 'An enemy is sweet in his lips: he can make many good words, and speak many good things; yea, he can weep with his eyes, but in his heart he imagineth how to throw thee into the pit. and. if he may find opportunity, he will not be satisfied with blood. If adversity come upon thee, thou shalt find him there first; and though he pretend to help thee, yet will he undermine thee. He will shake his head and clap his hands, and will make many words, and disguise his countenance.' Wherefore, seeing such is the cunning and the treachery of the wicked, that they hide seven abominations, that is to say, many crafty and cruel mischiefs, under the cloak of fair and loving speech, let us be more wary than commonly we are to suspect and avoid their guiles; and let us not be so simple as was Gedaliah, who though he was oft admonished to take heed of Ishmael, yet would not believe that he was such a one as he was, but thought him to be a kind friend, and one that tendered his good, when he was his deadly enemy, and one that sought his blood, yea, and as wily a dissembler as possibly could be in the world. Read Jer. xl. 14, also xli. 6. In the last of these three sentences which have been set down the hypocrite is threatened with a punishment due to his offence, which is, that his maliciousness shall be discovered in the congregation. There is no feigned thing that can long continue, neither is there anything secret, as our Saviour teacheth in the Gospel, which shall not be revealed. In this world the conspiracy of the wicked is by some signs or other oftentimes detected. At assizes and sessions before the bench of the justices and seat of the judge, secret hatred is often manifested and convinced by the effects thereof, which are lying in wait or murder, there sufficiently witnessed and proved. If there be any



secret malice, which is not in this world revealed or punished, yet at the day of judgment it shall be laid open, at which time the very secrets of all hearts shall be manifested before the tribunal seat of Jesus Christ in a most infinite assembly. Wherefore, neither can the rancours of the minds of dissemblers, neither yet the conspiracies of traitors, always lie hid, though they have a long time been smothered in men's bosoms, or hatched in secret or solitary places, but one day all these things shall come to judgment, and be revealed in the light.

Ver. 27. *He that diggeth a pit shall fall thereinto; and on him who rolleth a stone it shall return.*

He that goeth about to prepare some cunning mischief for another, commonly falleth, through God's righteous judgment, into the same himself. The pit which a man diggeth below in the earth to catch his neighbour in, taketh his own foot oftentimes; even so commonly he that lieth in wait to draw another into some danger or trouble, falleth thereinto himself at unawares, in such a sort as that thereby he receiveth some great harm. Again, the stone which a man casteth up into the air, to the end it may fall on his neighbour's head, and brain him if it may be, doth now and then light upon his own head, and break his skull; even so the bloody practice which the wicked person attempteth against the innocent, to the end he may take away of life, proveth oftentimes the means of his own destruction. When we see this come to pass, which falleth out very often, let us acknowledge the judgments of the Lord to be most just and equal.

Ver. 28. *The false tongue hateth those that smite it; and the flattering mouth causeth ruin.*

It is to be pitied that so good a mother as truth hath so bad a daughter as hatred. Nevertheless, according to the common proverb, and the doctrine in this sentence delivered, so it is that truth getteth hatred. Hence it is that 'the false tongue hateth those that smite it;' that is to say, the liar and false teacher speaketh ill of them, and odiously inveigheth against them that have reproved or confuted him. Of this number were those of whom the prophet complaining said, that they hated him that reproved in the gate. Now although, on the contrary side, the flattering mouth getteth friends, yet, as is added in the last words, it causeth ruin; for by sweet

persuasions and gracious utterance it moveth and draweth men to do those things which are evil, or bring them in the end into destruction.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 1. *Boast not of to-morrow, because thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*

A man may boast of time to come after two sorts, to wit, either by vaunting of some future prosperity, or by bragging of some course that he will take, or action that he meaneth to do. So did the merchants whom the apostle James, alluding to this place, reproveth, saying, 'Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into that city, and abide there a year, and buy and sell, and make our gain, when you know not what shall be to-morrow,' James iv. 13. This rejoicing or boasting of men that forget their infirmity and mortality, and set down things to come so certainly in their hearts, as if they could do what they would, is not good. The reason why thou shouldst not thus rejoice is, 'because thou knowest not what a day may bring forth;' to wit whether sickness or any hindrance of that which thou didst hope to obtain or purpose to do. The day is said to bring forth, because time travaileth with the Lord's decrees, and in their season bringeth them forth, even as a woman with child doth her little babes. Indeed, time properly worketh not, but, because God's works are done in time, it is said to do those things which are done therein.

Ver. 2. *Let a stranger's mouth praise thee, but not thine own mouth: another man's lips, but not thine own.*

We must not boast of time to come, neither must we glory in ourselves. A man is not to praise himself for divers reasons. First, Because the testimony which a man giveth of himself may be suspected of falsehood. Secondly, Because fools which desire vainglory use to commend themselves. Thirdly, Because it is needless for him that hath done well to extol his own gifts or virtues, inasmuch as his deeds will cause every one to commend him though he holdeth his peace. Last of all, Because it is a discredit to a man's neighbours when he shall be driven to commend himself because others do not.

Nevertheless in some cases it is requisite for a man to rehearse his own good deeds, to wit, when the hiding or concealing thereof may turn to the hindrance of the truth, to the hurt of the church, or to the impairing of God's glory. Otherwise, every one is to stay till others praise and honour him, doing always those things which are of good report, and deserve commendation. The testimony of another man, and especially of a stranger that is of no kin or acquaintance, is a proof of some certainty, and a crown of glory.

Ver. 3. *A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty; but the wrath of a fool is heavier than them both.*

This sentence notably accordeth with that of the son of Sirach: 'Sand and salt, and a lump of iron, is easier to bear than an unwise, foolish, and ungodly man,' Eclus. xxiii. 15. The wrath of a fool is most heavy to be borne in two especial respects: the one is, for that it is extreme; the other, for that it cannot be appeased. The burdens which the Israelites carried in Egypt were so heavy that they groaned under them; but the rage of the Egyptians was far more grievous unto them, and so intolerable that even they fainted under it. The servant that hath a furious master, the poor man that hath an angry rich man his adversary, and the wife that hath a jealous husband, feeleth that which here is said to be most true.

Ver. 4. *In hot displeasure is cruelty, and in wrath (as it were) a flood of waters; and who can stand before envy?*

Three vices with their effects are here compared together. Unto hot displeasure, which is the spark whereby a man is first kindled unto revenge, cruelty is attributed, and that very rightly; for anger thirsteth for blood, and is ready to revenge every word with the sword. To be short, it breatheth forth most terrible threatenings, and breedeth nothing but imprisonments and torments. Unto wrath, which is a stream flowing from hot displeasure, a flood of waters is ascribed, that is to say, a wasting or overthrowing of the welfare, good name, and life of many, like unto spring-tide, which overfloweth all the low grounds round about. Such a flood proceeded from the wrath of Herod, who, for that he saw himself to be mocked by the wise men, caused all the infants in Bethlehem and the quarters round

about to be slain, Mat. ii. 16. Finally, of envy it is said, which is the top of hot displeasure and wrath, that it is so tall and mighty a giant, as it were, that none can stand against it. Hot displeasure and wrath endure but for a short time; but envy or rancorous hatred continueth always. Hot displeasure and wrath are pacified by gifts and entreaty; but envy or settled malice will not be appeased. Hot displeasure and wrath are apparent, and manifest themselves; but envy and maliciousness lurketh closely and secretly in the heart. Hence it cometh to pass that hatred neither spareth nor misseth, as anger and wrath sometimes do, but revengeth at one time or other, and killeth, as we say, dead sure. The Son of God himself could not stand before envy, much less then can any other. Thus anger is evil, and wrath is worse, but envy is worst of all.

Ver. 5. *Open rebuke is better than secret love.*

A report is unto flesh and blood a bitter pill, which it cannot well digest; nevertheless it is a very wholesome thing, though it be not very pleasant. It is good, and it is better, as here is taught, than secret love. It is better than secret love, because it proveth him that is the reprover to be no flatterer, but a faithful friend, and because it is profitable, or at least may be, unto the party reproved. As for secret love, which suffereth a friend to go to the devil, or joineth with him in that which is evil, who seeth not that it is uncharitable and hurtful? Wherefore, according to the exhortation of our Saviour in the Gospel, if our brother offend us, let us not wink at his sin, but reprove him between him and us, Mat. xviii. 15. Between him and us I say, because reproof before witnesses, when the offence is secret, is neither good, nor commended by Christ, neither yet here is meant. For although open rebuke is mentioned in this place, yet hereby is not meant that reproof which is uttered before many witnesses, but that which is given to the party offending alone before his face, and not behind his back; for it is said to be open, because it is not secret or hidden from the offender, and because it is a fruit of love which is not covered, but made manifest. Yet again, if the offence be open, it may be lawful, and sometimes it is good and needful, by open rebuke to chastise the same.

Ver 6. *The wounds of a friend are faithful : but the kisses of an enemy are to be detested.*

Two unlike things are now compared together again, but both of these are manifest, and proceeding of secret contrary causes, to wit, wounds issuing from love lying hid in the heart, and kisses springing from hatred lurking therein. By wounds, sharp and piercing chastisements are meant, whether by words or by punishment inflicted. These wounds are as unpleasant as kisses are delightful; yet nevertheless they are good, yea, and to be much esteemed, when they proceed from a friend; for they are the effects of love, and they are means of drawing a man that goeth astray unto true repentance. On the contrary side, the kisses of an enemy, that is to say, the flattering speeches and fawning courtesies of one that beareth hatred, which either are expressed by words or deeds, are evil and detestable; for they do both proceed from a deceitful mind, and deceive him toward whom they are shewed. Wherefore let us wish rather, with a godly father, to be reproved by any, than to be praised by a flatterer; and let us pray with the holy prophet, both that the righteous may reprove us, and that we may not eat of the delicacies of the wicked, Ps. cxli. 5. To conclude, let us also not hate our brother in our heart, as the law of God commandeth, but rather thoroughly and roundly reprove him, if need shall require, Lev. xix. 17.

Ver. 7. *The soul that is full despiseth an honeycomb : but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.*

Daily experience teacheth that this sentence is true according to the letter, which declareth that he who is full of meat or drink loatheth all dainties whatsoever, and that he who is hungry or thirsty taketh his sustenance with great delight, according to the common proverb, wherein it is said that hunger is the best sauce. But we are not to think but that more than thus much is meant by this divine sentence which here is set down. Too much recreation, too much soaking in the bed, yea, too much studying of the book, is neither good nor pleasant. A moderation is to be kept in all things, which are to be used sparingly, that they may be the sweeter to us from time to time. The rich men, because they live in abundance, cannot relish their meats and drinks, and therefore seek for exquisite dainties,

which, when they have obtained, yet can they not much delight therein; but the poor, who seldom have their bellies full, and live in some want and scarcity, can feed heartily and savourily on a piece of bread and cheese, and can quench their thirst with a little water. So likewise they that are full of many good things whatsoever feel no delight in possessing or using the same; but they that feel the want or have the hunger of any blessings of God, corporal or spiritual, find great comfort and joy therein when they attain the same.

Ver. 8. *As a bird that wandereth from his nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.*

As it is not good for a man without a calling from God, or some just reason, to leave his standing place, so neither is it a safe thing, but very dangerous, for him to wander up and down. This wanderer may fitly be resembled unto the light-headed bird, that, leaving her nest, flieth up and down, in two respects—the one, her fickleness; the other, her misery. What moveth the feathered fowl to remove from her nest,<sup>7</sup> and to rove abroad, but mere inconstancy? Again, what gaineth the foolish bird by flying up and down, but weariness of wing and hazard of life, yea, oftentimes death itself? The wandering man is of no more staid mind, nor in any better case, but rather worse; for he rolleth from place to place, or changeth his profession, not of any necessity, or for God's glory, but of lightness of mind, or for some vain respect, as to see foreign countries or to live more pleasantly. Again, in travel he meeteth with manifold losses and crosses, whereof the pilgrim's life of all others is fullest; for as it is in the psalm, they wander in desert places hungry and thirsty, their soul fainting within them, Ps. cvii. 4. And, as one speaketh very truly,<sup>1</sup> it is a miserable thing from house and home to go abroad to beg food with fearful voice; but especially to wander with wife and children, and with parents which are stricken in age, is a most wretched estate. The wandering person is hated and despised by all; none honoureth his kindred, none regardeth his beauty, none careth for him, and none feareth to hurt him. Wherefore let every one settle his soul on God, and his body in that place and calling wherein he is set by the divine providence, neither of inconstancy leaving

<sup>1</sup> Tyrtaeus.

the same, neither drawing upon himself, by his own negligence or wickedness, the necessity of flying or leading a wanderer's life.

Ver. 9. *An ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: and the sweet advice of a friend is better than the counsel of a man's own soul.*

The ancient people of the eastern countries used to anoint their heads with precious ointments, and to perfume their houses and garments with pleasant and sweet incense, to the end their spirits might be quickened and their hearts revived. By this means they became very joyful, and the more able with cheerfulness to follow their vocation; for those things that delight the senses, delight and refresh the heart, the foundation of all the senses. Both here and elsewhere in the Scripture is the loving fellowship and advice of a friend very fitly resembled unto such ointments and perfumes as were used in old times, and especially among the people of the Jews, Ps. cxxxiii. For the company and conference of a well-willer is very sweet and gracious, both for that it testifieth his loving mind, and for that it bringeth with it and sheweth those things that are profitable and convenient. It is also rightly preferred before a man's own counsel; for a man's own counsel is blind in his own matters. Again, the thoughts of a man's own soul in time of adversity do rather trouble him, be he never so wise, than comfort him or free him from his perplexity.

Ver. 10. *Thy friend and thy father's friend forsake thou not, and enter not into thy brother's house in the day of calamity. A neighbour near is better than a brother far off.*

The love of brethren is rare, and kinsfolk are oftentimes unkind, but always lightly in the day of adversity most uncourteous. To declare this point, and to shew that kinsfolk are not too much to be trusted, brethren are here compared with friends and neighbours. 'Thy friend and thy father's friend forsake thou not.' Break not off familiarity with an old and tried acquaintance, but maintain friendship with him, and relieve him in his necessity. 'But enter not into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity.' Go not to any of thy kinsmen in the time of thine affliction, to crave their help and succour; for, as before hath been taught, all the brethren of the poor man hate him. Again, nature may

be without good-will, but friendship cannot. Nevertheless, natural and kind brethren—the number of whom is small—will relieve their own flesh, and shew what courtesy they may unto their brethren, rather than unto strangers; but, ordinarily, a friend will sooner help his friend than a brother will his brother. In the last words of this sentence, a neighbour near and a brother far off are compared together. A neighbour near is better than a brother far off in two respects: the one, for that he can help at a pinch, when necessity doth not suffer any delay; the other, for that he can help oftener than a brother far off, inasmuch as he is present with us very seldom, but a neighbour is near at hand always. Wherefore neighbourhood is no less to be regarded or maintained than brotherhood.

Ver. 11. *My son, be wise and rejoice mine heart, that I may be able to answer him that would fain blame me with some matter.*

The wise man, in the person of every father, exhorteth every son unto the study of wisdom, and moveth him thereunto in this verse by two fruits which will arise from thence. The one is, that if he be so wise as to know and obey the will of God, he shall rejoice the heart of his father; for a wise son, as before hath been affirmed, rejoiceth his father. The other is, that he shall drive away by this means reproach and shame from his father; for a foolish son, as also is taught in this book, maketh his parents ashamed. When a child is idle or ill-mannered, people will blame his father's government, and say he was ill brought up; but by the godly life of a child the father is freed from sorrow and blushing, and hath wherewith to stop their mouths that go about to blame him.

Ver. 12. *The prudent man foreseeing an evil hideth himself: but fools going on still are punished.*

This sentence hath before been at large expounded. Read chap. xxii. 3.

Ver. 13. *Take his garment who hath been surety for a strange man; and take a pledge of him that hath become surety for a strange woman.*

This sentence hath also been handled before. Read chap. xx. 16.

Ver. 14. *Unto him that blesseth his friend with a loud voice betimes in the morning, rising up early, a curse shall be imputed.*

This sentence pricketh shameless and importunate fawners and flatterers. He that speaketh fairly, or that saluteth his friend, is said in the Hebrew phrase to bless his friend. This is to be done in time and measure, but some neither observe due manner nor due season therein. He observeth not due manner, that saluteth or praiseth his friend with a loud voice, that is to say, with great crying out, or so as all may hear; he observeth not due time, that doth this betimes in the morning, rising up early, that is to say, shewing himself the first or before all others, to the end he may seem the chiefest well-willer. These may be called follentines, or rather fools out of time, seeing they visit and salute their friends at unseasonable hours. Unto the blessing of such a fool a curse shall be imputed; for such unseasonable dealing shall be counted and called nothing else but folly and flattery. This is the reward of an importunate flatterer.

Ver. 15. *A continual dropping in the time of a most vehement shower, and a contentious woman, are alike.*

Ver. 16. *He that hideth her may as well hide the wind; she bewrayeth herself as the ointment of the right hand.*

Two properties of a contentious woman are herein set down. The one is that she brawleth continually in the house, even as the drops of rain in a great shower fall down continually upon the ground. Now, as it cometh to pass that they that are in a great shower are thoroughly wet and greatly hurt, even so all that are in the family wherein a contentious woman continually brawleth are greatly troubled with her scoldings. The other property of such a woman is that she cannot be stopped or stayed from outrage or making loud outcries. To declare this point she is resembled first to the wind, the blowing or whistling whereof none can stop or stay; and secondly to a box of fragrant ointment held in the right hand, which none can hinder from sending forth a strong odour, or from perfuming the place wherein it is round about.

Ver. 17. *As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the face of his friend.*

The affections of a man appear in his countenance, whereby it cometh to pass that the very face hath great force, and provoketh much either to good or evil. The countenances of men do weep with those that weep, and laugh with those that laugh; an

angry look stirreth up unto anger, and a loving look draweth love to it. The face then is a whetstone which sharpeneth those things which otherwise would be but dull and blunt. Even as iron sharpeneth iron, so the face and presence of a man sharpeneth his neighbour to comfort, to knowledge, to love, to diligence, and to all good works. A man by himself is no man, he is dull, he is very blunt; but if his fellow come and quicken him by his presence, speech, and example, he is so whetted on by this means, that he is much more comfortable, skilful, and better than he was when he was alone. Hence it is that the Scripture elsewhere saith that two are better than one, and that a threefold cord is not easily broken, Eccles. iv. 12. Hence it is also that the apostle exhorteth the Hebrews not to leave their natural fellowship in assembling, but to exhort one another, and to sharpen one another to love and to good works, Heb. x. 24. A letter sent to a friend may do him no small good if it be wisely written; but the lively voice and presence of a friend is more forcible and effectual than any writing. Hence it is that St John saith unto Gaius the elder, 'I will not by ink and pen write (more) unto thee: but I hope I shall shortly see thee, and then we will speak face to face,' 3 John 13, 14. Hence also it is that the apostle Paul saith he longed to see the Romans, and that he had a great strife for those that had not seen his face in the flesh, Col. ii. 1. Now seeing fellowship between friends is so comfortable and profitable, solitariness and strangeness is not good. No marvel if they be blunt or rusty iron who withdraw themselves from all society. Other creatures are by nature sociable, but none receive such profit by society as men do.

Ver. 18. *He that keepeth his fig-tree shall eat the fruit thereof; so he that is serviceable to his master shall come to honour.*

Good fruit springeth from good labour. As a husbandman, watching his trees with a vigilant eye, and pruning them with a diligent hand, tasteth at last of the sweet fruits thereof; so the servant who is ready to please, and tendaut about his master, shall at last by him, or by the Lord in heaven, be rewarded and blessed. All sorts of inferiors then, as both servants and subjects, must make this reckoning and account of their superiors and rulers

that they are unto them their peculiar charge, whereon they must attend, and the special hope of their honour and preferment. They must therefore think and say thus with themselves: Surely this is the fig-tree that I must watch and keep; this is that same olive-tree that I must look unto. I must not suffer this to be spoiled or destroyed; I must not suffer my ruler's goods to be wasted, nor his name to be discredited, nor the gifts of God in him to decay; I must keep his favour, and I must seek his welfare, as much as in me lieth. Thus if every inferior would stand affected toward his superior, and deal with him as the husbandman doth with his fig-tree, he should receive from him love, praise, and preferment, even as the husbandman gathereth in convenient time many sweet figs of his fig-tree as a recompense of all his care and labour.

Ver. 19. *As water sheweth face to face, so doth the heart man unto man.*

No man knoweth or sheweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him. The water, as a certain glass, somewhat dim indeed, but very true, representeth the countenance therein imprinted unto the countenance that beholdeth the same; even so the heart sheweth man to man, that is to say, the mind and the conscience of every man telleth him justly, though not perfectly, what he is, as whether he be good or evil, in God's favour or out of the same; for the conscience will not lie, but accuse or excuse a man, being instead of a thousand witnesses. The countenance will sometimes bewray the heart of one man to another, even as the water sheweth face to face, in which sense this parable is expounded by many, but it will oftentimes deceive; for it will laugh when the heart is heavy, and declare love when the soul is possessed with hatred; but the mind will not lightly shew a man otherwise to himself than he is indeed. As water that is troubled representeth the visage amiss, so a troubled or polluted mind may sometimes wrongly shew to a man the estate wherein he standeth. But if the soul be not wholly corrupt, and the conscience seared as with a hot iron, it will declare to a man his condition rightly, though not peradventure fully in all respects.

Ver. 20. *The grave and destruction can never be full; so the eyes of man can never be satisfied.*

The two eyes of a covetous man are herein very

fitly resembled unto two devouring things, to wit, to the grave and destruction. By the grave the place of burial is meant, which receiveth unto it infinite carcasses, with open mouth continually craving more, and being ready and wide to receive as many as can be put into it. By destruction, sickness, death, rottenness, the worm, and whatsoever it is that consumeth and devoureth the creatures that are in this world, is understood. The former of these is, as it were, a bottomless gulf; the other is, as it were, a greedy wolf; neither can either of them both at any time be filled. So likewise are the eyes of a man unsatiable; for although they see that already they have received great blessings from the Lord, and that they have gotten much substance which they may call their own, yet, not being herewith content, they desire to see and to have more, and whatsoever they behold, that they greedily covet. Wherefore this concupiscence of the eyes ought to be as odious to every one as is hell or destruction. Now, as our Saviour reasoneth in the Gospel, if the eye, which is the candle of the body, be dark, that is, if it be corrupt, covetous, or envious, then the whole body will be dark, that is to say, corrupt and miserable, Mat. vi. 22.

Ver. 21. *As the fining-pot is for the silver, and the furnace for the gold; so a man is to try his own praise.*

This translation of this sentence which hath been set down agreeth notably unto the Hebrew words, and seemeth to a learned man very skilful in the Hebrew tongue, from whose hand I received it, to carry with it the natural sense of the parable, which by him is thus expounded. As, saith he, silver is tried by the fining-pot, and gold by the furnace, whether it be pure or no, even so a man is best judge of that praise which goeth of himself, whether it be true or no. Indeed, as before hath been taught in this book, chap. xii. 28, 'A man shall be praised for the understanding of his mouth;' and so, consequently, a man's praise is by his mouth, which sense also the Hebrew text will bear. But when a man is praised for his words or works, he must yet try this praise by his own concupiscence, whether it be deserved or no. A like sentence to this here set down is in the book of the son of Sirach, where it is said the furnace trieth the vessels of the potter, and the trial of a man is in his thought or speech,

Eccles. xxvii. 5; for the Greek word there used, *ἡ διαλογισμῶ αὐτοῦ*, signifieth both the thought and the speech, although most properly the thought. To conclude, praise may fitly be resembled to silver and gold, seeing it is a glorious and precious thing, yea, so precious a jewel, as that before in this book it hath been preferred before them both, chap. xxii. 1. Again, a man may rightly be compared to a fining-pot, seeing, by the light of his reason, and the fire of God's word, he is able, in good measure, to prove and discern what is true and false, sound and counterfeit. Finally, there can none so well judge of a man as himself, seeing his spirit within him knoweth his estate best, and his thought in most actions accuse or excuse him.

Ver. 22. *Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among barley with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.*

The wickedness of the reprobate is so incurable, that although he be pressed never so much with the sharp reproofs or punishments of men, or with the severe judgments and plagues of the Lord, yet he layeth not his sin aside, nor amendeth his fault. 'Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among barley with a pestle,' albeit thou shouldst take never so great pains in reproving or correcting a fool, yea, if thou shouldst put him into prison, or pound him in a mortar indeed, 'yet will not his foolishness depart from him.' Nevertheless the hardness of his heart and his wickedness will not be removed from him; for the grains of corn would at the last be broken or ground to powder, but his obstinacy or stubbornness will never be overcome. One kind of grinding which people used in old time was to put their parched corn into a mortar, and to beat it into powder. Unto this custom the wise king alludeth in this place, insinuating that no beating will amend an obstinate wicked man.

Ver. 23. *Be diligent to know the state of thy flock, and take heed to thine herds.*

Every one is to be diligent in his calling, and namely shepherds, who have to deal with cattle, whereby much profit may be received. 'Be diligent to know the state of thy flock.' Consider daily the condition of thy sheep and oxen, and suchlike cattle; look to the number of them, provide for them that which they want, and behold them even

with thine own eye. If the shepherds of the creatures which are void of reason ought to have thus great care of their flocks, and such special regard to their herds, certainly the rulers of men, both those that are civil and those that are ecclesiastical shepherds, should be much more careful and diligent in looking to and providing for the people committed to their charge; for they are sheep indued with reason, whose souls are immortal, and for whom Christ hath shed his blood.

Ver. 24. *Surely hidden store endureth not for ever: and is the crown from generation to generation?*

No cause there is why any should put affiance in worldly treasures which he hath laid up, be they never so great, or else so precious as is a crown; for they are all subject unto casualties, and in time they of themselves waste and consume. Yet seeing the hidden store endureth not for ever, every one, as before hath been taught, is to labour faithfully and painfully in his calling, and, as in the verse following is declared, providently to lay up for time to come that which shall be necessary. But as concerning the point which here is taught, what treasure is there in the world, be it never so royal or princely, which shall endure for ever, or which will not be drawn dry in the end, unless it be maintained by care and diligence, and unless, when any part of it is wasted, somewhat be supplied from time to time? Indeed if a man have great store of corn or other provision hoarded up, it may serve for many months, yea, and many years; but it will not always continue; and therefore it is no wisdom to spend continually on the stock, without labouring in some honest calling, and without getting in of new treasures from year to year.

Ver. 25. *The hay discovereth itself, and the tender blade appeareth, the grass of the mountains is to be gotten in.*

The earth of her own accord, as here is shewed, ministereth food for cattle, to serve them both in summer and winter. The meadows and the mountains bring forth grass and hay; the green and tender pasture to feed the cattle in summer, and the hay to feed them in winter, which therefore is to be laid up in the barn against that time. It should not seem strange to any that the Holy Ghost speaketh of the springing of the grass or laying up

of hay in this place; for the Scripture elsewhere entreateth of this matter, as, namely, in the psalm where it is said, 'The Lord causeth the earth to bring forth grass for the beast, and herbs for the use of man, that they may receive their food out of the earth,' Ps. civ. 14. In which place, as the prophet maketh mention of the fruitfulness of the earth, to the end he may commend the goodness of God thereby, so here Solomon speaketh of grass and hay, to shew that men are to provide for their cattle in time convenient.

Ver. 26. *The lambs shall be for thy clothing, and the he goats for a price of a field.*

Ver. 27. *Moreover, so much goats' milk as is sufficient shall be for thy meat, for meat for thy family, and food for thy maids.*

The intent of the Spirit of God in these last verses is not to prescribe a general rule of apparel or diet unto all men, but to shew that great commodity ariseth by keeping of cattle, and looking to them diligently; for, as here is declared, cattle well looked unto minister clothing, money, and food. Clothing, as is affirmed in these words, 'The lambs shall be for thy clothing;' that is to say, the wool of flocks will serve to make thee apparel both warm and comely; for, as all know, both coats and hosen, and all sorts almost of upper garments, are made or woven of wool. Money, as is declared in these words, 'And the he goats for a price of a field;' that is to say, the male goats and rams, and suchlike cattle as may well be spared, being sold, will bring thee money wherewith thou mayest buy corn or any other necessary thing, or some more ground; for money is a queen which, whosoever get, may easily therewith get all things. It is the measure, as the wise man teacheth, which answereth unto all, Eccles. x. 19. To conclude, food is obtained by the keeping of cattle diligently, as is plainly set down in the last verse, wherein it is said, 'Moreover, so much goats' milk as is sufficient shall be for thy meat, for meat for thy family, and food for thy maids;' that is to say, the ewes and the kine will give such abundance of milk as will sustain thee, thy wife, and children, and thy servants, so that besides other provision which thou mayest make with thy money, thou and thy family mayest have butter and cheese enough of thine own flock.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1. *Every wicked man flieth when none pursueth: but the just are like a young lion which is courageous.*  
See the root hereof, Lev. xvi. 17.

This holy proverb teacheth that wickedness maketh the wicked very fearful, and that righteousness maketh the innocent very secure and bold. In it, first, the wicked man is resembled to a bird, or some such timorous creature, which betaketh itself to flight when no cause thereof is offered. For the guilty person, after he hath committed some abominable act, (as, for example, theft or murder,) imagineth that some lie in wait for him, and doubteth he shall be taken; the reason is, for that although none is near to pursue him, yet the sound of terror is in his ears, and the sting of conscience will not suffer him to be quiet in any place. But the just, as is affirmed in the second place, are like a young lion which is courageous; for he goeth on his way boldly and swiftly, without returning back for fear of any. The reason is, for that being at peace with God, and having a good cause and a sound conscience, he dreadeth no objection nor danger.

Ver. 2. *For the rebellion of a land there are many princes thereof: but by a man of wisdom and knowledge the state likewise endureth long.*

The causes of the wealth and woe of kingdoms are herein declared. Every transgression causeth not the ruin of kingdoms, but rebellion against God. Although the wickedness of some few private persons sometimes draweth down a plague upon a whole commonwealth, yet not any particular, but the general rebellion of a land is that which causeth changes in the state thereof. The changes which the common rebellion of a land worketh, are the reignings of many princes in a short time succeeding one another, which are either all evil, or bad and good together. Such alterations are most hurtful to commonwealths, inasmuch as by this means new tumults continually arise, new laws are enacted, new officers placed, and new tributes imposed. 'But by a man of wisdom and knowledge the state likewise endureth long.' For by the advice and prudent dealing of one that feareth God, and is skilful in counselling and governing, as Joseph was, both the prince's life



and stock, and the people's peace and prosperity, shall be preserved. As before hath been taught in this book, by the blessing of the righteous a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.

Ver. 3. *A poor man oppressing the needy is as rain pouring down, so as that there is no food.*

A rich man oppressing the needy spoileth them utterly oftentimes; but the poor man that is hard-hearted dealeth yet more roughly and cruelly with them. That unmerciful servant in the Gospel who took his fellow that owed him a hundred pence by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest, may be an example of the truth thereof. Therefore, even as a great tempest or flood of water, sweeping away and choking the corn, and oppressing, as it were, the ground, maketh it barren and causeth a dearth; so a merciless poor man spoileth those that are needy, and even plucketh from them those things that are most necessary, yea, even their very food and raiment.

Ver. 4. *They that forsake the law praise the wicked; but they that observe the law make war with them.*

Like will to like, as the common proverb is. Such as altogether neglect the Lord's commandments not only commit divers gross sins, but commend those who in sinning are like themselves. For in their affections they allow them, in their speeches they flatter and extol them, and in their deeds they join with them and maintain them. But they that walk in the Lord's commandments not only dispraise them, but strive with them. For they rebuke them by words, cross them by deeds, and correct them by their authority, if they be magistrates. Nevertheless, neither are the evil to be dispraised for their good actions, nor the good to be allowed in their faults, but righteous judgment is always to be judged.

Ver. 5. *Men given to evil perceive not what is right; but they which seek the Lord perceive all things.*

The natural man perceiveth not the things that belong to God, but the spiritual man discerneth all things. Albeit there is some light in the wicked man which is sufficient to make him inexcusable, yet he is always so blinded by natural ignorance and malice that both Christ and the law to him is a mystery. Hence it cometh to pass that he neither

fully seeth what is to be believed, nor yet what is to be done, either generally in all sorts of actions, or particularly in the course of his calling or office. But he that seeth the Lord in his word and by prayer shall know all things needful for salvation, and for the discharge of the duties of his calling.

Ver. 6. *Better is the poor man that walketh uprightly, than he that perverteth his ways, though he be rich.*

This sentence hath been expounded before. Read chap. xix. 1.

Ver. 7. *He that keepeth the law is a prudent son: but he that keepeth company with banqueters shameth his father.*

Among sundry vices which young men are to take heed of, riotousness is one of the chief. Both the Lord himself and every godly father chargeth every child to live soberly, and to take heed of prodigality. He therefore which keepeth this precept of God and of his godly father is a wise son, and so consequently one that rejoiceth his parents. Wise he is, both for that he doth good and avoideth God's judgment, which he should feel if he did evil. See Deut. xii. But, on the contrary side, he which, not regarding the law, spendeth his time and substance in feasting and rioting, is not only foolish, but a blemish unto his father; for what will be said, but that such a man brought not up his children well. Again, if the father of the prodigal child see him come to extreme poverty or to punishment for his sin, how can he but blush and even hang down his head for shame?

Ver. 8. *He that heapeth up his substance by usury and increase, shall gather it for him who will be liberal to the poor.*

Two especial means of unjust gain are specified in the former part of this sentence. See the root hereof, Deut. xxiii. 10. The one is biting usury, as the word doth signify, which is that gain by lending of money or any other thing whereby the borrower is oppressed, and by little consumed; the other is increase, or multiplying, as the word importeth, which is that gain which is gotten either by false reckoning, as when more is set down or challenged to be owing than is owing indeed, or by receiving or extorting more than is due, or than the thing is worth indeed.<sup>1</sup> Both biting usury, and

<sup>1</sup> So Cajetan taketh this word, which also may signify any increase above the worth of a thing or equity.

increase above that which is right, is out of all doubt evil, and to be condemned. But all gain for the lending of money, or any like creature, is denied by Hemingius,<sup>1</sup> not without reason, to be unlawful. Yet in such commonwealths as ours is, wherein the positive laws of the land forbid all lending of money unto advantage, be it never so small, it is of conscience to be abstained from, and seemeth unto me unlawful; for the magistrate's commandment, both in holy and civil matters, is not only for fear, but for conscience, to be regarded and obeyed. Now if the binding of the rich to pay ten in the hundred or less is unlawful, because the magistrate will have no such dealing, how much more is the biting of the poor, by taking ten or more in the hundred of them, evil and ungodly, because the Lord hath in his word forbidden and condemned such cut-throat dealing? For the Lord saith in Exodus, 'If thou shalt lend thy money unto my people, unto the poor people which is with thee, thou shalt not be upon them as an usurer, ye shall not lay biting usury unto them,' Exod. xxii. 23. Indeed, to hurt the rich by any crafty and cruel dealing is a great sin, and therefore the prophet David, speaking more generally in the psalm, Ps. xv., reckoneth this to be one of the properties of a citizen of heaven, that he putteth not his money to biting usury. But to pinch and impoverish the poor, and that under the cloak of lending, is double iniquity and cruelty. For the case thus standeth, that, as Hemingius hath well observed, there are two sorts of lending. The one is a lending to which we stand so bound by God's law and the law of nature, that unless we do lend, we are guilty of sin before God. Here sometimes the very principal is not to be required, much less is the poor man to be bound by us to pay both the principal and the advantage. The other is a lending to which we are not bound by the law of God or of nature, but it is left free unto us to lend or not to lend. Here we may not by lending bite any, nor offend the laws of the land, but otherwise, as Hemingius thinketh, we may by lending both profit others and ourselves. But, as is shewed in the latter part of this sentence, 'He that heapeth up his substance by biting usury and increase, shall gather it

for him who will be liberal to the poor.' For his heir, through the just judgment of God, shall take a quite contrary course. The usurer did pluck from the poor, his heir shall give his goods to them. The usurer took much for the lending, his heir shall lend for nothing. The crafty rich man took more of the poor than the things he sold were worth, his heir shall take less. Finally, the covetous rich man increased his wealth by misreckoning, his heir shall reckon and deal justly with all sorts of people.

Ver. 9. *Whosoever turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer (is) abomination.*

Sinners may flatter themselves, and, namely, adulterers, murderers, and such usurers, and stubborn children, as before have been spoken of; but if any willingly and wittingly turn away his ear from knowing or obeying the will of God, so that he will not lay aside his iniquities or impieties, not only his sins shall provoke God, but even his prayers; and they shall not only be rejected, but be abominable, a matter of offending and incensing the Lord to wrath. As therefore such a one did refuse to hear God speaking in his law, so the Lord will in justice refuse him speaking to him by prayer. Therefore above all things be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools.

Ver. 10. *Whosoever leadeth aside the upright into an evil way, shall himself fall into his own pit: but the just shall possess that which is good.*

Seducers are herein threatened with the Lord's judgment. They are fitly resembled unto thieves or robbers who lead true men out of the way oftentimes to spoil them of their goods, 2 Tim. iii. For even so the wicked are seduced and seduce others, drawing them into danger, unto the committing of sin, or unto heresies, Acts xiii. But they shall fall into their own snare, as did the accusers of Daniel, Elymas the sorcerer, Saul, Haman, Ahithophel; in the meantime, they who are upright, or sincerely and constantly serve the Lord, shall not only escape the evils which seducers labour to bring them into, but attain and enjoy riches, honour, glory, and salvation.

Ver. 11. *A rich man seemeth wise in his own eyes: but the poor man who is prudent findeth him out.*

<sup>1</sup> See Heming. in Ps. xv.

Conceited arrogancy, usually accompanying abundance of wealth, is now reproved. It is the custom, not of godly rich men, but of wealthy worldlings, both to ascribe the getting of their goods to their own wisdom, and to like wonderful well of their own speeches, actions, and courses. Wherefore not without cause doth Paul will Timothy to put them in mind not to be high-minded. Now again it is the manner of foolish poor people, who measure all things by wealth, to flatter them, as the multitude did Herod, crying out, 'It is the voice of God, and not of man.' But the godly poor man, who knoweth the word, and is indued with the spirit of discretion, will so search and find the rich man out, that he will discern, and, if need require, declare him to be either an ignorant or wicked person, as may appear in blind Bartimeus's (?) conference with the pharisees, John ix. Nevertheless, as this ought to humble the rich, that the poor go sometimes beyond them in spiritual gifts; so ought it not to breed any malapertness in the poor, who should always be far off from dealing saucily with their betters.

Ver. 12. *When the righteous triumph, there is great glory; but when the wicked are lifted up, (in the wicked men's rising up,) a man is sought for.*

Tyranny is spoken of in this sentence, a vice most contrary unto the mild and righteous government of the just; for their reign bringeth forth glory as a most precious fruit, so that it causeth religion to flourish, peace to abound, plenty to be in every place, to conclude, temporal and spiritual blessings to spread far and near. What miracles were done in the wilderness whilst Moses ruled! What conquests had Joshua! What peace was under Solomon! What zeal under Daniel! On the contrary side, wicked rulers make havoc of church and commonwealth. They seek for the godly to slay them, the rich to spoil them, all to molest them. But of this point more hereafter in the exposition of the 28th verse of this chapter, as also in the interpretation of the second verse of the next chapter.

Ver. 13. *He which hideth his sins shall not prosper: but he which confesseth and forsaketh them shall receive mercy.*

Hypocrites are threatened with a miserable judgment. 'He which hideth his sins,' either by denying that evil which he hath done, or lessening it, or

else continuing it, 'shall not prosper,' but shall be left and remain in grief of mind, poverty, sickness, or some other trouble, as David was, until such time as he confessed his sin against himself, Ps. xxxii. But he which confesseth his sins to the Lord, as Job did, Job xxxi. 33, and not only acknowledgeth them in words, but in deed and affection forsaketh them, shall not only be forgiven, but obtain many graces and blessings, as did the prodigal son. It is not always necessary to publish secret sins to men, which may but breed offence and infamy and dishonour to the Lord; nevertheless sometimes this is to be done, both publicly and privately. But both manifest and secret offences are always to be acknowledged unto the Lord, and sin is always to be forsaken. It is no marvel if divers many years together are not taken from the rack of the Lord's visitation, seeing they will not confess their iniquities to him as they ought. See a like promise, Job viii. 4-7.

Ver. 14. *Blessed is the man who greatly feareth always: but he which hardeneth his heart shall run headlong into evil.*

Security is a forerunner of God's judgments, but the man is happy which feareth always. Indeed, whosoever is possessed or tormented with a servile fear is most miserable; but he which is indued with a son-like fear, so that he dreadeth to swear vainly, to profane the Sabbath, or to sin against God; he which worketh on his salvation with fear and trembling, so that he standeth in awe of the Lord, not only in the church, but out of the same; finally, he which reverenceth the Lord continually, so that he feareth him, not for an hour, or day, or month, or by fits,—as some which have an angelic fear now and then upon them,—but all the days of his life, is most happy. For such a one doth no evil; the Lord heareth his prayers, and maketh him at the last an inheritor of his kingdom. The secure people of the world, on the contrary side, harden their hearts, both by resisting the word, and by not profiting by the Lord's works, and by not yielding unto the motions of his Spirit. They do therefore but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and so fall at last into sin, into trouble, into the jaws of death; to conclude, even into hell; for when they say, Peace, peace, then sudden destruction cometh on them.

Ver. 15. *A wicked ruler over the poor people is as a roaring lion and a roving bear.*

The rage of tyrants is here fitly compared to the cruelty and ravening of bears and lions, which prey on the lambs and on the sheep, 1 Sam. xvii. For as the lion frayeth the poor beasts with his roaring, and preyeth on them with his teeth, and as the bear searcheth them out and teareth them with her paws, so ungodly superiors of all sorts threaten, oppress, and slay such as can make no resistance. They which are of the lowest degree are sometimes as fierce as bears or lions; but rulers should be pastors, not wolves, and parents, not tyrants. Not only divers magistrates are tyrants, but many householders are bears and lions in their families. But Christian masters must remit their threatenings, and lay aside all bitterness, wrath, and outcries, Eph. iv. and vi. The inferiors which are oppressed are as the sheep of Christ, to bear injuries patiently, Ps. xxii. They are also to pray to be delivered from such lions, and to assure themselves that they shall at last in some sort tread them under foot, Ps. xci.

Ver. 16. *A governor void of all understanding, (understandings,) and much in oppressions (shall shorten his days): but he which hateth gain shall prolong his days.*

As tyranny, so covetousness ought to be far, as from all men, so chiefly from rulers. Politic Pharaohs imagine they deal wisely when they lay grievous burdens on the Israelites. Foolish Rehoboams think it the most prudent course to scourge the people with scorpions. But such rulers who are much in oppressions, encroaching the people's lands, getting their goods by hook and crook, and exacting extreme tribute, estrange their subjects' hearts, offend God, fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which plunge men into destruction, and therefore have indeed no understanding. But he that is so far from covetousness that he is a man, as Jethro would have rulers be, which even hateth gain—that gain, I say, which is unjust—shall wax old in the favour of the people, as Samuel did, and be beloved of all men, and blessed of the Lord, 1 Sam. xii. Then let the conversation of every one be without covetousness, as the apostle exhorteth, and let every one be content with the things that are present, Heb. xiii. Would any know a covetous man? Look

on his conversation, his bargains, his housekeeping, &c. Would a covetous man know whether this root of all evil be in himself or no? Let him look on his mind, his cares, his fears, his desires. But above all others, let magistrates say to the Lord, with David, 'Incline mine heart to thy statutes, and not to covetousness,' Ps. exix.

Ver. 17. *Let a man pursued for the blood of a person (soul or life) fly to the grave; let none uphold him.*

Magistrates are not to pardon wilful murderers. By Moses' law, they who slew any at unawares might have cities of refuge, and be preserved from death by the rulers, but he which offered violence, and maliciously slew his neighbour, was to die without mercy. They which maimed their neighbours were to pay eye for eye, tooth for tooth, Exod. xxi. 22, but he which took away life, by man was to be deprived of his life, Gen. ix. Magistrates may be moved by rewards to show such favour, but the Lord would have no reward taken for a man-slayer, Num. xxxv. Pity may sometimes incline them to mercy, but the Lord would not have their eye to spare them, Deut. xxix. Magistrates, then, being the deputies of the Lord, are to execute his law on wilful murderers, as Solomon did on Joab, 1 Kings ii. When men take no vengeance on him which sheddeth innocent blood, God pursueth him, as he did Cain. The papists' impiety is here notably detected, who did set open sanctuaries and privileged places unto all sorts of notorious offenders.

Ver. 18. *He which walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he who is perverse in his ways (his two ways) falleth therein (in one.)*

This is the course which magistrates are to observe in their judgments, imitating the Lord's example—namely, on the one side, to defend and spare the righteous, who, neither declining from the right hand nor the left, walk circumspectly in the straight way of the Lord's precepts; and, on the other, to punish the transgressor, who either doth that which is wicked, or dealeth unlawfully in those actions which are lawful. Those, then, who either use deceit in their best actions, or commit gross sins and walk therein, shall at one time or other be taken napping, as was Shimei, and be plagued in some of their iniquities, as were the Israelites. If magistrates

always punish not the wicked and cherish the good, as they ought, yet surely the Lord will, 1 Cor. x.

Ver. 19. *He which tilleth his land shall be satisfied with food: but he which followeth vain (persons) shall be filled with poverty.*

Disorderly walkers, who do nothing but go up and down as busybodies, have been oft before reprov'd, chap. xii. 14, and xxiii. 21, and here are taxed again. Amongst other upright ways this is one, that a man diligently follow his vocation. When husbandry or any such trade is well put in use, it will, through the Lord's blessing, yield unto a man sufficient to content him, and to maintain his family, as may appear in the rich estate whereunto Jacob came by the Lord's blessing on his industry. The provident, then, and the diligent shall have food to kill hunger, garments wherewith to cover them, and money for good uses. But the good companions and youths of this world which follow hunting, hawking, carding, dicing, stage players, and such vanities, or are vagabonds roguing up and down the country, shall not only want necessaries, but be filled with poverty, bondage, grief, and misery, as was the prodigal son.

Ver. 20. *A faithful man (of faithfulness) is full of blessings: but he which hasteth to wax rich shall not be unpunished.*

As unthriftiness shall be punished by the Lord, so posting to be rich shall be revenged by him. 'A man of faithfulness,' to speak as the Spirit doth in the original tongue, who dealeth plainly and truly not only in word but deed, both with God and man, not only in one matter but all, 'shall be much in blessings,' shall be made partaker, not of one good thing only, but of many. His credit shall be great, he shall have peace of heart; his store shall increase, he shall have children; unto him at last it shall be said, 'Come, thou blessed of my Father.' Now, as touching those who make haste to be rich, or who, as Paul speaketh, will be rich, as it were, whether God will or no, who get their goods by hook and crook, or by playing the parts of drudges and snudges, to conclude, who labour after wealth, but use not to call on the name of God, nor regard his word, these make commonly more haste than speed, seeing they are not unpunished, but fall into temptation and a snare, meeting with some loss or cross instead of

gain and advantage, as birds hasting to the prey are oft in their flight stricken and slayed with a pellet. Ahab made haste to Naboth's vineyard, but at last drank a cup of bloody grapes for his posting.

Ver. 21. *It is not good to accept persons (the face): for (so) a man would transgress for a morsel of bread.*

Of the number of such as make haste to be rich are they who respect persons in judgment. He that is infected with this vice, albeit he be a man of high calling in the commonwealth, and although there is no comparison between truth and justice and a morsel of bread, yet will he easily be hired and brought to hold his peace, or to give a false sentence, for a little paltry game, for a dinner, yea, for a morsel of bread. Not only magistrates are to take heed that they be far from this sin, but others also. If ministers are given to this vice, they will teach false doctrine, or smother the truth that they may still enjoy the rich men's trenchers. If people be carried away with it, you shall see them extol a papist for a little relief at his door.

Ver. 22. *A man of an evil eye maketh haste (to get) riches: but he knoweth not that poverty shall befall him.*

Of the crew before spoken of are, moreover, miserable niggards, who are noted to be men of an evil eye, because with the eye they desire other men's goods, envy their neighbour's prosperity, and grudge those who come unto their tables the very meat which they eat. Such Labans spare, and care, and toil exceedingly, imagining through their industry and pinching both to attain to abundance and always to live in plenty. Yet at last, by some casualty, or by death, poverty, which they fly by all means, cometh unto them, as may appear in the rich glutton described in the Gospel, Luke xii. and xvi. See this parable expounded in Ps. xxxix., xlix. Also oft before in this book.

Ver. 23. *He which reproveth a man, in the end shall rather find favour than he which flattereth with his tongue.*

The vain and needy people of this world, seeking by all means to enrich themselves, use flattering speeches to this intent, knowing that fair words make fools fain. But yet, as here is shewed, they which reprove shall find more favour than they which flatter. Indeed, many find fault with others, and control them; but because they do this with

a harsh spirit and in an indiscreet manner, their speeches make them rather odious than gracious unto the parties rebuked. But he which reproveth his neighbours justly, wisely, charitably, and that to a good end, and, as Paul speaketh to Titus, that they may be sound in the faith, he shall reap a precious fruit after his labour. True it is, the wicked and sottish people of the world will hate them most which rebuke them most for sin; for with such, flattery getteth friends, and truth hatred. Nevertheless they which have any spark of grace or are wise will bear good-will to a reprovor, and hate a flatterer. The consideration of the reprovor's affection and his reasons will win the party reproved to amendment, and raise up in him a great liking of that man or that woman who told him of his fault, as may appear in the example of David, Ps. cxli. Let us then rather by wholesome rebukes labour to profit our friends, than seek to please them by soothing speeches. Oh, saith flesh and blood, I shall lose my friend and gain if so I do. But fie upon such loathness to displease, as betrayeth a friend even unto Satan himself. Let rather the commandment of our Saviour move us to reprove our brother between him and us; let woe threatened by Ezekiel hold us back from sowing pillows under every elbow, Ezek. xiii.

Ver. 24. *He which, spoiling his father or his mother, saith it is no sin in comparison to a man who is a murderer.*

Robbing of parents, or spoiling of them by any means, is a great and grievous sin. To steal from a stranger is no small fault, which sin those who commit are justly punished with death; it must needs then be a detestable kind of robbery and injury when not strangers, but parents shall be, not lightly endamaged, but spoiled by their children, and that without scruple of conscience and securely. A notable example hereof we have in Micah, of whom mention is made in the book of Judges, who, although he had stolen from his mother eleven hundred shekels of silver, yet made he no conscience to disclose his theft, or to restore it, until such time as he heard his mother wish a bitter curse unto the thief, and then he acknowledged his fault, not of any remorse of heart, but only to avoid the curse which his mother had pronounced, Judges xvii. Thus

doth the heart of ungodly children seduce them oftentimes, who say, These goods belong unto me, they are mine own, I have my part in them, why should I not take them, use them, and spend them? But howsoever such a wretch may delude himself, he is in the fault, and punishment to be joined, not with a common thief or robber, but with a destroyer and murderer.<sup>1</sup> The Lord, in Deut. xxi., expressly commandeth that such children be stoned to death. Of this generation are all children who pilfer from their parents, spend their goods riotously, incur debt, and make their parents pay it; put their mothers by from their right after their fathers' decease, or, as lords over their parents' goods, do what they list with them.

Ver. 25. *He which is high-minded stirreth up strife: but he which trusteth in the Lord shall be made fat.*

The high-minded are here beaten down; for that such are meant by those who are of a large soul appeareth by that expectation<sup>2</sup> of Paul to Timothy, which may serve as a perfect exposition of this sentence: 1 Tim. vi. 17, 'Command the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God, who giveth unto us all things richly unto fruition.' The which last words also declare what is meant here by being fat, which, being a borrowed speech taken from those who are in good plight of body, noteth out the abundance of God's blessings. He then which is high-minded, secure, and frolic in regard of his outward prosperity, as was the rich glutton, Luke xxii., saith that he shall never be removed, as David did, Ps. xxx., and despiseth his neighbours, oppresseth them, and raiseth up unnecessary wars and strifes, as did Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xviii., when he provoked the Syrians, by the which jars and contentions he must needs be vexed and somewhat pulled down in his estate. But he which is humble in all estates, and trusteth in the Lord, as the prophet willeth Israel to do, Ps. cxxxii. shall prosper in body and in soul, and be satisfied with peace of heart and many good things, as it were, with marrow, Ps. lxxiii. and xcii.

Ver. 26. *He which trusteth in his own soul is a fool: but he which walketh wisely shall deliver himself.*

<sup>1</sup> That the word here used signifieth thus much may appear Isaiah lxiv.; Exod. xii. 23. <sup>2</sup> Qu. 'exhortation'?—Ed.

They that are wise in their own eyes fall into the sin before condemned, and are here fitly reprov'd. Such trust in their heart as imagine that they have no need of the help or advice of others, and refuse to follow the direction of the godly wise, giving them sound counsel out of the word; for these devise new conceits, practise such forms of worshipping God as are not found in his word, take evil courses, and yet persuade themselves that therein they do God good service, and that in them they shall find good success. David, numbering the people of Israel, imagined he did very wisely in so doing; neither would he at the first hear Job advising him to the contrary; but at the last he crieth out, 'I have done foolishly.' Then, howsoever conceited persons or devilish politics seem wise unto themselves, yet they have no understanding in very deed. 'Be not therefore wise in yourselves,' saith Paul. 'And woe be to those,' saith Isaiah, 'who are wise in their own eyes.' But he which not only heareth the good advice of others, (which many do who yet are thereby never a whit the better,) but putteth it into practice, shall both be preserved from imminent dangers, and delivered out of present troubles or inconvenience, even as Moses found rest unto his soul by following Jethro's counsel, and Naaman health in his body by obeying the advice of his captive handmaid and other servants. For indeed one man standeth in need of another, as do the members of the body.

Ver. 27. *To him which giveth to the poor (shall be) no want: but he which hideth his eyes (shall be) full of curses.*

Unmercifulness toward the poor draweth on men the Lord's curses and crosses. Albeit divers fear they shall beg if they give unto the poor, yet the cheerful and liberal giver of alms shall be so far from wanting, that he shall have abundance and gain by his spending. But that vile and miserable wretch, who is so far off from pulling the coat from his back, therewith to clothe the naked, or from staying the meat from his mouth, with it to feed the hungry,—which yet every Christian ought rather to do than to see his poor brother perish,—that he will not so much as look on the lazar, or hear the voice of the beggar, shall by him be cried out against, and by the Lord cursed in his body, cursed in his goods, cursed in his soul, cursed in his children, and in all things.

Ver. 28. *When the wicked are lifted up, a man hideth himself: but when they perish, the righteous are increased.*

Tyranny yet once again is entreated of in this conclusion of the chapter. When the wicked rule they raise up such a storm that the just, being sought for to be slain or molested, get them to some foreign countries, as did David; or lurk in dens, as did the prophets in Ahab's time; or pray in corners, as did the disciples when the sacrificers of the Jews raged; or fly as birds unto some shelter or other. But when the ungodly perish, then the righteous swarm as a company of bees in a sunny day, returning from other countries, multiplying in towns and cities, filling whole churches, winning and converting many to the truth by their doctrine and example, shewing their faces boldly and openly. The chief use of this doctrine is to teach us not to be troubled at the changes of the world, or troubles of the times. 'In the time of good,' saith Ecclesiastes, chap. vii., 'enjoy that which is good, and use the time of evil.' Bees suck sweet honey out of the bitter thyme; so the godly must draw comfort and joy even out of hard times and grievous afflictions. A Christian without the cross is not worth a pin.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

Ver. 1. *A man who oft having been reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be so broken as that he cannot be cured.*

The fearful estate of those here is shewed who by no means will be reclaimed from their wicked ways. In the former part of this sentence the sin of obstinate persons is described, in the latter their punishment is declared. This is their sin, that even as the stubborn horse and brute beast will not be ruled with bit or bridle, but when the yoke is to be put on, resist, and with a stiff neck reject it; so obstinate people continue in their sins, and grow harder hearted daily, not enduring to hear the truth, persecuting their teachers, and fretting against the troubles which the Lord bringeth on them as bridles and yokes to subdue and tame their pride and fierceness. Yea, though such have been told of their faults not once, but a hundred times,

and the Lord himself hath schooled them for the same by sickness, infamy, poverty, and divers crosses, yet they do securely and boldly proceed in swearing, lying, adultery, murder, theft, and such other vices, persuading themselves either that no evil shall betide them, or that they shall go through it well enough. The punishment wherewith such obstinate wretches shall be revenged is remediless destruction. Neither will the Lord be a long time in bringing them to ruin; as they by the space of many days, months, or years together refused correction, but he in an hour, or some short space, will quite overthrow them. Of all other sins, then, obstinacy is most to be avoided, seeing other transgressions of all sorts may find pardon when repentance followeth them, but hardness of heart doth nothing but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. This was that sin which often the prophets upbraid the Jews withal. Isaiah saith that their neck was a sinew of iron, and their brow brazen, for which cause, as he also testifieth, they were smitten on the head and in the heart, Isa. xlvi. 4. Yea, saith he, 'There is no soundness from the sole of the foot unto the head,' Isa. i. 5, 6. Jeremiah also, complaining of and lamenting the unrecoverable plague of the Israelites, taketh up such speeches as these, 'Is there no gum or balm in Gilead? Is there no physician thereof? For why hath not the daughter of my people recovered?' Jer. viii. 22.

*Ver. 2. When the just are increased, the people rejoice: but when the wicked man ruleth, the people sigh.*

This sentence sheweth that such is the estate of the people, as is the disposition of the governor. In the former part is affirmed that when good magistrates bear office, howsoever some wicked rascals or rebels may be sorry therefor, yet godly people, and generally the multitude, will be glad, for they shall enjoy their lives and goods quietly; by the defence of such, and under their rule, religion shall flourish in their congregations, the Lord himself will bless their land with plenty and many good things; finally, they shall be free from grievous taxes, plagues, seditions, and many miseries. The wise king who wrote this divine parable, saw in himself the particular experience of that general observation which here he setteth down; for being anointed king over Israel by Zadok, the whole

people went up after him playing on pipes, and rejoicing so greatly that the earth did ring and cleave, as it were, with their voice, 1 Kings i. 40. David his father also, being advanced by Saul, so carried himself in his wars against the Philistines, that the Israelitish women, moved by his worthy and valiant exploits unto rejoicing, sung in triumphing wise that Saul had slain his thousands and David his ten thousands. The latter part of the sentence declareth, on the contrary side, that the rule of the wicked ministereth matter of grief and misery unto the whole multitude. The estate of the poor people over which foolish persons or cruel persecutors have the rule or tyrannise, becometh lamentable sundry ways. First, The Lord himself usually plagueth the land with judgments from heaven wherein an enemy of his holdeth the sceptre. Secondly, Wolves in such a kingdom having the place of shepherds, but the nature of devouring beasts, spoil, oppress, and eat up the silly lambs and sheep. Thirdly, The people, living without all good order or means of their prosperity, fall daily into all sorts of sins and pits of destruction. Sundry occasions then of grief being continually offered the people, through the carelessness or cruelty of evil governors, if peradventure they dare not openly complain for fear of further trouble, yet how can they but sigh secretly in corners? Certainly so did the Israelites oppressed in Egypt, and Elias persecuted by Ahab and Jezebel. Even as then the welfare of the sheep dependeth on the shepherd, and even as such is the constitution of the body as is the disposition of the head; so the condition of the people answereth in woe or wealth to the goodness or badness of the magistrates.

*Ver. 3. A man that loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots wasteth his substance.*

This drift of the Spirit in this instruction is to declare that whoredom bringeth beggary at the last. Two sorts of love herein are spoken of, one spiritual, another carnal. The spiritual love is commended, which is a wonderful liking of and following after wisdom. Such as are enamoured with this virgin of heavenly wisdom, (which is holy, peaceable, moderate, full of mercy and good works, as James speaketh, James iii. 17,) shall not only by this means please



the Lord, or be profitable unto themselves, but comfortable unto their parents. Sundry ways doth the wise son cheer up his father's heart: first, By the virtues which are in him; secondly, By the fame which is spread of him; thirdly, By the hope which his father conceiveth that he will be thrifty; last of all, By his liberality and kindness towards his parents, if peradventure, by reason of his gifts, he be at any time exalted to honour, as Joseph was, who also in this respect rejoiced his father. As concerning the carnal love spoken of in the latter part of the sentence, that is condemned, and threatened with poverty. The vain youths of this world, having shaken off the yoke of obedience, and despised wisdom, fall in love with naughty women, with whom they are daily conversant, making them good cheer, bestowing gifts on them, and maintaining them in brave apparel. Hereby not only they defile themselves with wandering lusts, but spend their patrimony, and consume their parents' goods, so bringing sorrow upon them, instead of the joy wherewith they ought to labour to comfort them. Such a lewd course took the prodigal son, who, having wasted his substance, was put to feed with the swine. Among other reasons then dissuading from whoredom, this is not the less to be regarded, that strumpets are dangerous rocks and unsatiable gulfs.

Ver. 4. *A king by judgment establisheth his realm: but a man which is a slave to gifts that are offered, destroyeth it.*

Herein again the Holy Ghost admonisheth rulers of their duty. He entreateth in this verse of two matters—one the executing of judgment; another the avoiding of bribes. In the former place is shewed that judgment is the prop or pillar of kingdoms. When justice is ministered without partiality, in such sort that the godly are rewarded, and the wicked punished, and every man hath right done to him, the Lord will bless the land, the good will love their prince, the bad shall be cut off, and not be able to do any hurt. This may be observed throughout the stories of the kings of Judah, that all the while they gave themselves to set up true religion, or to punish sin, their kingdoms were in peace, and they got the victory over their enemies. In the latter part of this sentence is declared, that

the receiving of bribes is the overthrow and bane of a commonwealth. The reasons hereof are manifest and sundry: first, To respect persons, which bribe-takers do, is an abomination to the Lord, and therefore such a transgression as pulleth down his vengeance on the place wherein it is committed; secondly, By this means no place being left for right but for gifts, there must needs grow factions and mutinies; last of all, A window being set open through such partiality to hope of impunity, all sorts of sins (the plagues of commonwealths,) must needs daily multiply and increase.

Ver. 5. *A man which flattereth his friends, spreadeth a net against his feet.*

In this sentence is declared that flatterers are a very hurtful and pernicious kind of people. They are fitly here compared unto hunters; for even as the hunter spreadeth the hay or net to entangle the poor beast which cometh by it, Rom. xvi., even so flatterers, by sweet speeches or salutations, seduce the hearts of the simple, and by their shows of friendship and righteousness go about to get some advantage at their hands, thereby to draw them into trouble, Luke xx. 29. Of this wicked dealing Micah complaineth, saying, 'The good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men; as many as are lie in wait to slay: every one hunteth his brother with nets,' Micah vii. 2. Flattery then is no better than a secret or subtle kind of murder, inasmuch as thereby divers are drawn either to receive errors, or to commit sin, and so to fall into the snare of endless damnation, or into danger of law or hazard of life.

Ver. 6. *In the transgression of the wicked man there is a snare; but the just man singeth and is merry.*

Here is shewed what a hurtful thing sin is in general, as before was declared how dangerous an evil flattery is. Howsoever the act of iniquity is joined with pleasure, yet the end and wages thereof is pain and death. The snare here spoken of is some loss or cross, as poverty, sickness, grief of mind, punishment of law, and the wrath of God, all which pursue and follow the offender; hence it cometh to pass, that inasmuch as the plagues of this world, or of the world to come, commonly molest the wicked, that are in fear, sorrow, silence, shame, and confusion; 'But the just man singeth and is merry.' There is

none so righteous as he that is without sin ; but such are called just here who are justified by faith in Christ, and sanctified in some acceptable measure by the Spirit. Inasmuch as the faithful walk in their callings with an upright conscience, and are blessed by the Lord many ways exceedingly, they both outwardly magnify him with psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, and inwardly are cheerful, being filled with joy of the Holy Ghost. Indeed none are more in afflictions than they, but they are so far off from mourning in this respect, that they count it exceeding joy when they fall into manifold trials. When the apostles were beaten for publishing the gospel, they went from the face of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be disgraced for the name of Christ, Acts v. 41. Paul and Silas being cast into prison, prayed and sang even at midnight, Acts xvi. 25.

Ver. 7. *The righteous man knoweth the cause of the poor : the wicked man applieth not his mind to know it.*

Negligence in judging or determining cases in controversies herein is condemned. By knowing of a person or cause, oftentimes in the Scripture the protecting, favouring, and furthering thereof is meant. Thus the Lord is said to know the way of the righteous, and to know those who are his, that is, to favour them, and to take care of them. Here then is meant, that although the poor man hath no money to give bribes, or wealthy friends to take his part, yet the godly man, discerning his case to be right, by all means and with all pains defendeth it against the rage of the mighty adversary. Such an upright judge was Job, who protesteth that in the days of his prosperity and authority he was a father of the poor, and searched out the cause which he did not understand, Job xix. So David prophesying of Christ in the psalm, affirmeth that he would defend the poor people, and save the sons of the needy, Ps. lxxii. 4. But the wicked man, as the same prophet complaineth in another place, and here Solomon testifieth, hath no regard, or applieth not his mind to know it, Ps. lxxxii., either because he giveth himself to pleasure, or because the poor is not able to give bribes.

Ver. 8. *Scornful men set a city on fire : but the wise turn away wrath.*

Here is shewed that deriders of God and god-

liness, such as either jest at other, or in rage contemn other, do much hurt to the society of mankind. The hurt which they do is like the hurt of fire, yea, much greater than it ; for they overthrow religion, peace, concord of neighbours, and love of friends. This do they either by their false doctrines, malicious speeches, evil examples, or wicked practices. How true this is may appear in Demetrius, who set Ephesus in an uproar. Indeed, sometimes this crime is laid to their charge, who are of all others the furthest from it, as it was by Ahab to Elias, and by Tertullus to Paul. The reason hereof is, because the wicked cannot or will not put a difference between the fire and sword which our Saviour came to put into the world, and that flame which Satan and his instruments kindle. As for those who are indued with the wisdom whereof James speaketh, which is peaceable, and lowly, and heavenly, they are so far off from kindling of dissensions, or raising up tumults, that either by their authority, or counsel, or gravity, or long-suffering, they appease all the strifes, and quench, as it were, the fires which arise and begin to kindle. When Sheba the son of Bichri, through his sedition and pride, had subdued the city Abela, and by reason of his conspiracy it was now in danger of overthrowing, a certain wise woman delivered and freed it from siege by appeasing the wrath of Joab, who went about to destroy it, 2 Sam. xx.

Ver. 9. *If a wise man debate a matter with a fool, whether he be moved to wrath, or whether he smile, yet is there no quietness.*

They are noted with infamy in this sentence who are unreconcilable and past amendment. Albeit the wise pacify some unruly people, as in the sentence before set down hath been affirmed, yet others there are who never can or will be persuaded to cease from their tumults or wicked course which they have entered into. Two means commonly are used by the godly and prudent servants of God unto the reclaiming of fools,—by whom proud, wrathful, stubborn, ignorant, and wicked persons here are meant,—from their folly and madness. The former of these is to be moved, as here Solomon speaketh, that is to say, to be in good sadness, to deal earnestly, to look with a stern and austere countenance, to allege weighty reasons, or to use

forcible speeches of persuasion and round reprehension. The apostle Paul calleth this manner of dealing a coming unto offenders with the rod. The other means is smiling, or, as the same apostle speaketh, the spirit of mildness, that is to say, humble entreaty, fair speeches, and friendly looks, tokens of good-will, common or special courtesies, and such-like gentle means of winning men's hearts. Let now a godly or peaceable person come to instruct or pacify a froward or wilful fool, he laboureth in vain; for either because he is proud he contemneth fair entreaties and gentle courtesies, or because he is sottish and furious, or more malicious, he no more regardeth reasons or rough dealing than feathers or the wind. Such fools the pharisees were, whom whether our Saviour confuted by reasons at any time, or allured by soft speeches, and a meek conversation, he prevailed with them never a whit. The other Jews were, for the most part, of the same disposition, who, like froward children, would neither mourn after the doleful pipe of John the Baptist, nor dance when Christ Jesus went about to stir them up to gladness by a more cheerful pipe and tune than his forerunner sounded.

Ver. 10. *Bloody men hate the upright person: but the just seek after him.*

Here is shewed that this is the proper note, and a certain sign of wicked, hurtful, and merciless men, to be at deadly enmity with every one who hath any goodness in him. The principal reasons of this hatred are, that the light of the one reproveth the darkness of the other, and the course of both their conversations is quite contrary. Cain being a bloody man at the beginning of the world, in a manner hated Abel to the death. Esau's wickedness is in the Scripture offered to our view in the hatred he bare to Jacob; Saul's in his dealing with David; the pharisees' in their raging against our Saviour. This must needs be a great sin, seeing the enmities which are exercised against the godly indued with heavenly graces, redound unto God, the author of every good thing, Ps. cxlii. But they who fear God seek the soul of the righteous, that is, love him, and labour to preserve his life; for so this phrase is used in the Scripture, and is here to be taken, as the opposing of the latter part of the sentence unto the former manifesteth. The bloody hate the upright to the

death, but the just love his life most dearly. Every one, then, is to take heed that he be not among the number of those who love not good men, as Paul admonisheth, 2 Tim. iii. Always the godly have shewed themselves careful of practising love towards the saints, as may appear in Obadiah's feeding of the prophets in a cave, Ebedmelech's drawing of Jeremiah out of the dungeon, the disciples' compassing of Paul, and letting him down in a basket.

Ver. 11. *A fool uttereth his whole mind: but a wise man holdeth it back.*

As before often in this book the sin of blabbing and babbling hath been reprov'd, chap. xiv. 33, 15, 2, 28, so here again it is checked. The root of it is folly, for when men have no discretion, nor power of themselves, either they blaze abroad their own secrets, or prattle of their friends' intents, sayings, and doings, or object unto their adversaries the faults which they know by them, or oppress and bewray the trouble and misery of their own hearts and estates. But he who hath a state of himself, and is indued with discretion, will reserve his speech until the fittest seasons, that therein it may be most forcible, and thereby do most good, yea, sometimes he will pass things over with perpetual silence. This wisdom was in Jacob, who kept in his mind when his daughter was ravished, and in David, who answered not when Shimei railed on him, and in Gamaliel, who commanded the apostles first to be put out, and then spake his mind.

Ver. 12. *All the servants of the ruler which hearkeneth unto lies (are) wicked.*

Another vice is here condemned, to wit, the receiving of false tales, or opening the ear willingly to hear evil reports against any. This sin is to be avoided by all, according to the commandment of the Lord: 'Thou shalt not receive a false report, nor put thy hand with the wicked to be a false witness.' It is contrary to the law of God and to charity. He that carrieth Satan in his ear is no less blame-worthy than he which carrieth him in his tongue. Untruths are cherished and fostered, as it were, by those who are too light of belief. But this credulity in admitting of every vain and false rumour is especially to be shunned by rulers in church, commonwealth, or private families; for all the inferiors commonly follow the example of the

superiors. Again, when servants see their masters delighted in hearing their complaints and tales, to please them, or to win favour, or to discredit the good, they will bring many lies into their ears. Moreover, the governors which are given to this vice will not delight in any under them who will deal plainly and truly, but will put such out of their service. Thus it cometh to pass that all the servants of such a ruler are wicked, being either heretics or flatterers, or whisperers, or given to some such vice. Indeed sometimes it may fall out that an Obadiah may lurk in Ahab's court; but this is rare, and commonly the sway goeth another way. Who were Saul's courtiers, but Doeg and such backbiters? Such then as are the superiors, usually such are those who are under their power and government. If the master and mistress in a family be zealous, zeal will be found oftentimes in the lowest servant which goeth to the door, as may appear in Rhoda. If they be lukewarm, it may be observed that their children, and those who attend on them, be neither hot nor cold. Finally, if the heads of the family be profane, amongst those who are in the household nothing is to be perceived but irreligiousness, worldliness, brawling, pride, and wantonness.

Ver. 13. *He that is rude and he that is witty meet together: the Lord lighteneth both their eyes.*

This instruction tendeth to dissuade us from partiality. To this end is shewed, first, That there are two sorts of people in the world of a diverse disposition; the one poor in wealth, or gifts of the mind, the other rich, and indued with abundance of outward blessings, or spiritual graces; in one word, some are baser, and some more excellent. Secondly, These people of contrary estates or dispositions, by the course of the divine providence, are said to meet together, either in the church or street, or some private house or place upon occasion. The learner cometh to the teacher to hear, the poor to the rich to receive alms; one for one intent, another for another. Thirdly, 'The Lord lighteneth both their eyes.' There is no respect of persons with that heavenly Sun, who lighteneth every one, who cometh into the world, John i. 9. In the Lord both of them live, move, and have their being, Acts xvii. The father of mercies causeth his sun to shine as well on the one as on the other, Mat. vi. He

created and redeemed them both. None therefore is to be despised by such as fear God for his wants or low degreee, chap. xxii. 2. 'Brethren,' saith James, chap. ii., 'have not the faith of Christ in respect of persons.'

Ver. 14. *The throne of that king who faithfully judgeth the poor shall be established for ever.*

Magistrates are advised in this instruction to follow the example of the Lord, who regardeth both the poor and the rich. In like sort then rulers are to defend not only the wealthy in their right, but the needy; yea, inasmuch as the poor, the fatherless, and the widow are weak, subject to many dangers, and not able to resist the violence of the mighty, good rulers are especially to protect them, and deliver them from the hand of the oppressor. So doing, they shall be established for ever, that is, a long time, as this word is often taken in the Scripture. A fuller exposition of this sentence is to be fetched from ver. 7 of this chapter, xiv. 20, and xxviii. 5.

Ver. 15. *The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself shameth his mother.*

After that Solomon hath given an admonition to magistrates, whereby they might be directed in well governing the commonwealth, he giveth now certain precepts concerning the right ordering of youth in a private family. This admonition tendeth to stir up parents to train up their children in the fear and nurture of the Lord. In the former part of it a blessing is promised unto discreet and moderate correction. The rod, that is to say, stripes, when occasion shall require, bestowed on a child, and a reproof, that is, a rebuke by words, give wisdom, that is to say, make him modest, dutiful, religious, and a practiser of God's commandments; for indeed true wisdom consisteth not in learning, or knowledge of worldly or spiritual matters, but in practising the law of God with a conscience. This fruit of correction, as it is precious in itself, so it must needs be comfortable to the parents of that child in whom it is; for, as before hath been affirmed, 'A wise son maketh a glad father.' But, as it followeth in the latter end of this sentence, 'A child, or boy, left to himself, shameth his mother.' Then a boy is left to himself, when he is neither chastened with the rod nor controlled by words, but cockered, as Adonijah

was by David. This fault is often to be found in fathers, but yet commonly it most of all reigneth in mothers, who, if they have sons especially, cannot abide that in their tender age they should be spoken to or sharply dealt withal; for this cause here the Holy Ghost especially directeth his speech to mothers, and threateneth them. It is then a fault in parents only to use admonitions, and not therewithal corrections which are necessary, or to neglect both the one and the other means of bringing their children to amendment. 'What child is it,' saith the apostle, 'whom the father correcteth not?' Cockering parents will say, if so they do they shall make their children foolish; but here a promise is made of the contrary, namely, that they shall make them wise. But this point hath been entreated of before in chap. xxii. 15, xiii. 14, and xxiii. 13, 14. Only thus much may here be observed, that such as at God's commandment will not correct their children with the rod, would hardly with Abraham take the knife to slay them if the Lord should enjoin this for their trial.

Ver. 16. *When the wicked increase, sin increaseth: but the just see their fall.*

As in the former verse the precious fruit of the use of correction hath been declared, so here the fearful hurt and inconvenience which falleth out by the neglect thereof is insinuated. Hereby it cometh to pass that the wicked persons, increasing in age, in number, in power, increase in sin also, being not babes in maliciousness, but growing to the top of all impiety and iniquity. Even as a man proceedeth to his just stature by degrees, and the body, which is little at the beginning, waxeth great in process of time, so is it with sin. Every man, saith James, is drawn aside and deluded by his own concupiscence, and concupiscence having conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin being perfected, bringeth forth death. Now then sin and the wicked man are, as it were, twins, even born together, and both loving, living, and growing together in like sort. And even as the thorn or brier, whilst it is in the bud or green, may be handled and hurteth not, as afterward it doth, but the longer it continueth and groweth, the sharper and more harmful it waxeth; so the older the wicked man is, the more sinful he becometh, and the more the ungodly increase, either

in number or strength, the more wickedness spreadeth, till at the last, by a general backsliding, all flesh corrupt their ways. At the beginning of the doctrine of the gospel the Jews were somewhat pliable, and the most obstinate of them raged not so much as at the last they did against our Saviour. The Egyptians oppressed not the Israelites at the first, but at the last they came even to drown their infants, and to make most vile bondslaves of them. But, as here is added, that the righteous shall see the fall of the wicked, so the Israelites at length beheld the Egyptians drowned in the sea. David notably pointeth out this matter in the psalm, saying, 'Whilst as yet your prickles shall not be felt, the prickles of eglantine, he will destroy both that which is quick, and that which is dried up. The just shall rejoice when he shall see vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked,' Ps. lviii. 10. As this teacheth parents in time to apply correction, so also it serveth to encourage the godly, who are not to be troubled, but rather to lift up their heads when they see the ungodly to increase every way.

Ver. 17. *Chastise thy son, and he will bring thee rest: he will also give pleasure unto thy soul.*

Other excellent fruits, beside that wisdom which was mentioned in the 16th verse, are shewed here to spring from nurturing and correcting of children. It is a grief to parents to deal sharply with their children, which when they do, lightly their bowels yearn within them. But first here quietness and rest is promised unto them for their pains. Their well-nurtured children shall, as it were, bring the chair unto them of ease and refreshing. They will so dutifully behave themselves in all respects, that their parents shall need to take no thought for them; they may quietly lie on their beds, or securely sleep therein. Again, they will so diligently despatch their parents' affairs, that they may sit at home and take their rest. This is one excellent fruit indeed, but another is also added in the last words, 'He will also give pleasure unto thy soul.' Even as ground well tilled and dressed, or trees well pruned and looked unto, bring forth to the husbandman sweet flowers and dainty fruits and food; so the well nurtured child will utter such gracious speeches, do such righteous deeds, have such comely gestures, and practise such obedience and thankfulness toward his

parents, as that his father's soul shall much more delight in such virtues of his, than Isaac's soul delighted in venison, or the savoury meat which Jacob brought unto him. See examples of the truth hereof in Isaac, Jacob, Joseph.

Ver. 18. *When there is no vision, the people are made naked: but blessed is he that keepeth the law.*

Both the ignorance of ministers and the disobedience of people herein are taxed. By the vision is meant the doctrine of the word of God, which the prophets, who were called in old time seers, received by visions and by revelations, 1 Sam. iii. 2; 2 Sam. ix.; Isa. i.; Amos viii. The vision is said then not to be, when sound doctrine is not taught at all, but there is a miserable famine of the word; again, whenas the word is sometimes expounded, but not sincerely, diligently, and soundly, so that the people may be as sheep without shepherds in the midst of great plenty of such as take on them to be teachers, Mat. ix.; moreover, when of the preaching of the word is made light account, so that the prophecy is despised as a thing not necessary, 1 Thes. v.; last of all, when God hath in vengeance shut up the eyes both of teachers and hearers, so that the word of God, or the vision, is to the learned as letters sealed, which he cannot open, and to the unlearned as letters, which he cannot read, Isa. xxix. 9. Alas! how can it be but that the people must needs be made naked, when by reason of the want of the vision they must needs lie open to God's wrath, which hangeth over all unbelievers, and, as a company of naked souls, and like to the Israelites, whom Aaron is said to have made naked, want Jesus Christ the robe of righteousness and happiness, want faith, want mortification and sanctification, want the whole armour of God, and the wedding garment? How is it possible but that their souls must needs be pined away and starved for want of spiritual food and comfort in the midst of temptations and afflictions? Eph. vi.; Mat. xxv. And will it not come to pass that such poor people, walking as heathen in the darkness and vanity of their minds, will rush into errors, fall into idolatries, break out into blasphemies, run into all sorts of sin, follow after witches, finally, degenerate into the nature of brute beasts, and wax worse than they? Amos viii. But, on the other side, 'Blessed is he that keepeth

the law.' Divers hear the word, but it is to their condemnation, and therefore the outward enjoying of the exercises of religion maketh not any happy, but rather those it maketh most miserable, who only are partakers of them, and are not with them partakers of God's Spirit, or transformed thereby into the image of Christ, but remain unreformed, prattling hypocrites, such as only have an outward show of godliness, but deny the power thereof in their deeds. But the happiness of that man, on the contrary side, is unspeakable, who is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, who believeth in Christ Jesus, James i., who bringeth forth good fruits as a tree planted by the river's side, and that in due season and without withering; finally, who groweth daily in all sorts of gifts of the Holy Ghost. For the sound and true Christian shall by the means of the word, which he firmly keepeth, be directed in all his particular actions, perserved from sinning against the majesty of God, comforted in the midst of all his afflictions, and after that God hath poured upon him many blessings in this world, be made an heir of the kingdom of glory, which is in heaven. Although profane Esau shall seek his blessing with tears, they shall not find it; but as our Saviour testifieth in the Gospel, 'blessed is he,' and surely he only, 'who heareth the word of God and keepeth it.'

Ver. 19. *A servant is not to be chastened with words alone, whenas understanding, yet he answereth not.*

Stubborn and disobedient servants are here shewed to be of so vile disposition, as that rebukes by words alone will not make them do their duty, and therefore they must be beaten with stripes. Some servants are so stout, that when they either are called to come to their masters they will not come, making show that they hear them not, or when a question is asked of them they will hold their peace of a cursed stomach. These are of the number of those who, when they hear, do not answer; and such birds as can speak, and will not speak, must be made to speak. But such again are of this sort, who, though they say they will do all which their masters enjoin them, yet answer not their commandments by putting them into practice; in which sense the word of answering is oft used in the Scripture, as where the Lord is said to answer those

his suitors whose prayers he granteth. It seemeth that our Saviour had relation to this proverb when he saith in the Gospel, that 'the servant which knoweth his master's will and doth it not, shall be beaten with more stripes than he which knoweth it not. Let servants in families, according to the exhortation of the apostle, 'be subject unto their masters, serviceable in all things, not gausaying them,' Titus ii. Let those who profess themselves to be the servants of God, when they know their duty out of the word, not neglect to practise it, lest the Lord lay on them his scourges of poverty, sickness, and other afflictions.

Ver. 20. *Hast thou seen a man hasty in his words? There is (better) hope of a fool than of him.*

As disobedience and sullenness is a bad property in servants, so likewise is a quick and talkative tongue here condemned, both in them after a special manner, and in all generally, as a great fault. The fool which is slow of speech, and speaketh sparingly, sinneth and offendeth for want of matter or of wit; but the prattler which is quick and busy of his tongue, so that he giveth his neighbour or master a cross answer and quip, without any study, offendeth by reason of an ill habit and an arrogant spirit. This vice of babbling is at all times to be taken heed of, but especially in prayer, as the wise king exhorteth in the book of the preacher, saying, 'Make no haste with thy mouth, and let not thy mind be swift to utter anything before God,' Eccles. v. 2, 10. For a fuller exposition of this sentence, turn to review the notes set down in the 26th chapter of this book, and the 12th verse.

Ver. 21. *He that bringeth up his servant daintily from his youth, shall at the last be bereaved of his children.*

As all are the worse for liberty, so here is shewed that such who be of a servile estate or condition, thereby of all others are most spoiled and corrupted. Servants are then brought up daintily, when they are lifted up to great offices, whereof they are not worthy, or clothed with fine apparel, or fed with cheer, or suffered to have too much ease, or familiarly spoken unto and entertained. When they are tried to be faithful, they may be trusted lawfully with great matters, and put in high places, as was Joseph; but to advance or let loose the bridle unto

some natures is to spoil them, according as this wise king found by experience, who placing Jeroboam his servant over the family of Joseph and his works or munitions, felt him at last a heavy adversary and rebel, 1 Kings xi. 28. And, indeed, the insolency of such beggars set on horseback is intolerable, as is insinuated in the latter part of this sentence. They will not only beat their fellow-servants, as is shewed in the parable of the Gospel, but slay or put by and hurt their master's children. Zimri, the servant of Elah, king of Israel, was by him so advanced and esteemed, as that he was placed captain and overseer over the half part of his chariots; but within a while Zimri affecting to be a lord, not only slew Elah, his good master, but the whole stock of Baasha, Elah's father, 1 Kings xvi. 11.

Ver. 22. *A wrathful man stirreth up strife, and a furious man is full of transgressions.*

As too much remissness, so wrath is to be taken heed of. Let anger be kindled never so little in any, the wrathful person will provoke such as he dealeth withal unto brawling or fighting, either by his ireful looks or cross speeches, or hasty strokes and blows. But if anger increase in any great measure, so that it, burning into a flame, maketh the person therewith inflamed furious, it not only breedeth contention, but bringeth forth a great number of sins of sundry sorts; for the furious person curseth, sweareth, slandereth, envieth, murmureth, and is ready to commit murder. See a very like sentence, James iii. 16.

Ver. 23. *The haughtiness of a man casteth him down: but honour lifteth him up who is cast down in spirit.*

This point hath oft been handled; as, namely, in the 22d chapter of this book, and the 15th verse, also in the 18th chapter, and the 17th verse. Briefly, the meaning of this sentence is thus much—to wit, that the pride of heart, lifted up either in regard of some gifts, whether outward or inward, or by reason of some secret rebellion and contempt of God, shall be an occasion of bringing that haughty person to low degree and wants, who before was of high estate, and indued with many blessings. Again that, on the contrary side, the humility and lowliness of the spirit, cast down under the almighty hand of God, and giving honour to men, shall be, as it were, a

pillar to uphold all those graces and blessings whereof the party therewith indued is already made partaker, and furthermore, as a step to greater honour, shall increase his dignity and prosperity in every respect. For he that lifteth up himself shall be brought low, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Adam, Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar may be witnesses on the one side, and David, the virgin Mary, and Elisabeth on the other, of the truth of this sentence.

Ver. 24. *He that is partner with a thief hateth himself: and he which, hearing cursing, declareth it not.*

We are herein taught to be far off from communicating with sinners, as to rebuke and reprove those offences whereunto we are privy. All men generally count it a wicked thing to steal, and many, who are even without all fear of God, will not rob or pilfer themselves; but a great number make no bones to be accessory unto evil-doers, and are glad when they may have any share in a rich booty manfully gotten. Howsoever such may think themselves to be better than thieves, yet the prophet Isaiah maketh them all one with them when he saith, 'Thy princes are the fellows of thieves,' Isa. i. Now here is shewed, that not only these partakers with evil-doers are in fault as well as they, but that they shall not escape punishment; for thus much is meant when it is said that they hate their own soul, or themselves—that is to say, they make themselves subject to danger of law, to infamy, and to the wrath of God, inasmuch as thieves and robbers shall not inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. The Lord, by his prophet, threateneth such, affirming that, inasmuch as they saw a thief, they consented to him, and were partakers with the adulterer; therefore he would reprove them, and set their sins in order before them, Ps. 1. But as he draweth on himself the Lord's judgments, who communicateth with thieves in their spoils and evil deeds, so he also offendeth, and casteth himself into his wrath, which hearing cursing, declareth it not—that is to say, who hearing any to blaspheme, to swear, or otherwise abuse his tongue, telleth him not of his fault, if he be such a one whom it is wisdom to reprove. This to be the natural sense of these words may appear by that mother sentence unto which this verse is referred, which is set down in Lev. v. 1, 'Also when one hath sinned,

and he hath heard the sin of blasphemy, whereof he is witness, whether he hath seen it, or whether he hath heard it; if he tell it not, surely he shall bear his iniquity.' In which place, as appeareth by the suit of the whole chapter, the Lord speaketh not of public but of private offences, and not of accusations brought unto magistrates, but of private admonitions.<sup>1</sup> Many a one who heareth his neighbour use most execrable speeches, herein thinketh him highly to offend, and is ready in heart to condemn him; but although he let him proceed, or open not his mouth at all to declare his fault unto him, yet he blameth not himself; because he knoweth not, or doth not consider, that his suffering of his neighbour's sins to pass without any controlment used by him, maketh him subject to the punishment due thereunto. Well, then, to stir up every one to pull his neighbour out of the fire, here is shewed that silence kept in such cases causeth us to incur the recompense due to other men's offences. Let us then, as the apostle exhorteth, follow the nature of light, which not only hath no fellowship with darkness, but reproveth and declareth the works thereof. Let us practise the commandment of our Saviour, if our brother offendeth us, to tell him between us and him. If our brother, I say; for as for scorers, another course is to be taken with them.

Ver. 25. *The fearful man layeth a snare before himself: but he which trusteth in the Lord is placed on high.*

As in the verse going before the effects of communicating in sin, or winking thereat, have been shewed, so in this the contrary working of infidelity and faith are declared. The spiritual fear and son-like reverence of God is a fountain of life, as before in this book hath been affirmed. Again, the natural fear of danger, of troubles, and of death is not to be reprov'd, so long as it keepeth in compass, or is sanctified by the Spirit of God; but here a slavish and hellish fear is spoken of, springing from infidelity, and troubling the mind above measure with the dangers or evils of this life, or the world to come. This fear worketh a snare, even death and destruction, even as the apostle saith the sorrow of this world doth. For, first, He which feareth the faces of men or troubles, runneth by this means into many

<sup>1</sup> Thus Tremellius and Junius also take it.



sins, and to leaving his calling to trust in carnal helps, and to deny the truth of God. Secondly, He giveth the adversaries great advantage over him, whom by reason of his fear he is not able to resist, and who on this occasion are emboldened. Thirdly, By extreme passions his senses are bound, his spirits dulled, his body cast into diseases, and his mind faileth and fainteth. Last of all, Inasmuch as he doubteth of the favour of God, by this means he doth incur eternal damnation, seeing the fearful shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. As, then, the fearful beasts and birds fall into pits and enwrap themselves in snares, in like sort the timorous persons draw the judgments of the Lord upon themselves. There are a great number in the world which are far from this fear, and yet no nearer to happiness, if not further off from it, than the timorous; for they fear neither God nor man, but presumption embraceth their necks as a chain. Their destiny hath before been set down, that they shall fall into evil. 'But he which trusteth in the Lord is placed on high.' The person which is secure of the good-will of God, which constantly suffereth afflictions, and valiantly as a soldier of Christ proceedeth in well-doing, shall be safe and sure under the Lord's defence, inasmuch as he will be as a rock, as a tower, and as a castle unto him. For, first, Nothing shall touch such a one to do him hurt. Secondly, The Lord, even in this world, will oftentimes preserve him, as may appear in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Last of all, His soul after death shall mount up to the heaven as to a fenced city. David, Daniel, and Paul may be witnesses of the truth of this doctrine.

Ver. 26. *Many do seek the face of the ruler; but every man's judgment is from the Lord.*

Preposterous suing for favour is here condemned, as before inordinate fear was reproved. To seek for redress unto rulers, or to sue for favour at their hands, is not unlawful. But first we must put up our supplications unto the court of heaven. So did Esther, and prospered; but the rulers of Israel, taking a contrary course, and going first to Pharaoh, had ill success. Let us then take heed that we put not our trust in princes, for they are deceitful; again, their hearts are in God's hand; finally, they

have no power but that which is given them from above.

Ver. 27. *The wicked man is an abomination to the just: and who is upright in way is an abomination to the wicked man.*

The effects of wickedness and of righteousness, on the contrary side, are herein noted. 'The wicked man is an abomination to the just;' that is, the just abhor the ungodly, justly and according to their deserts. For, indeed, what fellowship is there between righteousness and unrighteousness, or the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent? The godly then must needs hate the wicked, yea, they cannot but abhor them, even as the dung of the earth, which men remove far from their senses and habitations. Now, 'he who is upright in way is an abomination to the wicked man;' also, on the contrary side; that is, the godly or righteous person is unjustly hated by reason of the evil disposition of the ungodly. For otherwise, even the most wicked have cause enough given them by the righteous to love them. But they hate the just, first, Because their works are good; secondly, Because they will not run to the same excess of riot with them; thirdly, Because they reprove their sins; and, last of all, Because they are not of this world. Indeed, the godly love the wicked, as they are God's creatures; but in regard of their sins, they hate them, yet in such sort as the physician doth hate the disease, and not the sick person. When the wicked man is converted there will be an agreement between him and the righteous; but until that time, inasmuch as they are of contrary dispositions and courses, there can be no true love between them. Of the truth of this doctrine, Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, David and Saul, Christ and the Jews, may be witnesses.

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### CHAPTER XXX.

*A gathering together of the words of Agur, the son of Jakeh.*

Ver. 1. *Let the excellent man say, Let God be with me, let God be with me, and I shall prevail.*

Ver. 2. *Surely I have been brutish since I have been*

*a man, neither is there in me the understanding that was in Adam.*

*Ver. 3. Neither have I learned wisdom, nor known the knowledge of holy things.*

The sentences which are contained in this chapter were uttered, not by Solomon, but by one Agur, as the title thereof sheweth. This Agur was a holy man of God, and being indued with excellent wisdom, he uttered sundry parables, as Solomon did. As concerning these verses, the purpose of Agur therein is to exhort every one, not to glory in himself, but in the Lord. The exhortation herein set down agreeth notably with that admonition which the Lord himself giveth in the prophecy of Jeremiah, where he saith, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength, nor the rich man in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me,' Jer. ix. 23, 24. Whereas it is said in the first of these verses, 'Let the excellent man say, Let God be with me, let God be with me, and I shall prevail;' thus much hereby is meant, that none, be he never so wise, or rich, or strong, is to think that he can do anything by himself, and that every one is to assure himself that he can do much if the Lord be with him, to whom all glory is to be ascribed. The prophet David speaketh to the same effect, whereas he saith, 'By the Lord I have broken through an host, and by my God I have leaped over a wall,' Ps. xviii. 29. The people of Israel sing the same song in a certain psalm, where they say, 'If the Lord had not been on our side when men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us,' Ps. cxliii. 2, 3. A like voice is uttered by the apostle Paul, in name of all the elect, whereas he saith, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' Rom. viii. 31. The same apostle speaketh thus in the Epistle to the Corinthians, 'I laboured more than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God that is with me,' 1 Cor. xv. 16. To conclude, the self-same apostle in another place uttereth words very like to these of Agur, whenas he saith, 'I am able to do all things through the help of Christ, who strengtheneth me,' Phil. iv. 13. I am not ignorant that other interpretations are given of this verse; but the signification of the Hebrew words, the comparing of these places of

Scripture, and the suit of the matter following, confirm this sense, besides many other proofs which for briefness I let pass. Now, furthermore, as is declared in the second and third verses, every excellent man, though he be even born again by God's Spirit, is to acknowledge, not only his natural weakness, but blindness and ignorance. For he is to say, 'Surely I have been brutish since I have been a man, neither is there in me the understanding that was in Adam. Neither have I learned wisdom, nor known the knowledge of holy things.' That is to say, first, He is to confess the rudeness that is in him, even as Jeremiah doth when he saith, 'Every man is a beast by his own knowledge,' Jer. x. 14; secondly, He is to confess the loss of the image of God which was in Adam at the beginning; thirdly, He is to confess that he hath not learned heavenly wisdom from any of the wise or prudent men of this world, from whom it is hidden; and, last of all, That he hath not by his own wit, or by the light of reason, pierced into the deep mystery of saving knowledge. For indeed flesh and blood revealeth not Christ to any man, but the Spirit of God only working by the word.

*Ver. 4. Who can ascend up to heaven or descend? who can gather the wind in his fists? who can bind the waters in his cloak? who can establish any bounds of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?*

To convince every man, be he never so excellent, of his natural ignorance, a riddle, as it were, or a very dark question, is propounded unto him in this verse. The question is, whether by nature he knoweth his name, and his son's name who ascendeth up to heaven and descendeth, and so forth; that is to say, whether he knoweth God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. For it is the high God that ruleth both the heavens, and the winds, and the waters, and the earth, as is shewed in divers places of Scripture, Amos ii. 9; Ps. xiv. 5; Job xxxviii. There are no members of a body in the Lord, but feet and hands are ascribed to him, to shew that there is somewhat like in regard of his effects. To know the mystery here set down is not only a hard but a happy thing, as the evangelist declareth when he saith, 'This is eternal life, to know thee to be the only true God, and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ.' This Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is

the graven image of his Father, and in whom his name is written, so that no man can know the Father's name unless he know the Son's name, whose name, as Isaiah sheweth, is wonderful, the counsellor, and the prince of peace, and so forth.

Ver. 5. *The whole word of God is most perfectly purified: he is a buckler to those that betake themselves to him.*

Ver. 6. *Add not to his words, that he reprove thee not, and thou become a liar.*

In these two verses the word of God is commended unto us as the glass wherein we may behold the face of God the Father and of his Son, whom by the light of nature we cannot perceive. Whereas it is said that the word of God is most perfectly purified, the meaning of this speech is, that the whole Scripture is both most true and most excellent, as the silver that hath many times been refined in the fire. The doctrines of men are false and corrupt, but the word of God containeth no error, neither is it imperfect in any respect. The word of God is of the same nature that God himself is of, who is a buckler to those that betake themselves unto him; for the Lord preserveth the faithful from dangers, yea, and from sin and Satan. Wherefore we must put a lively trust in God, and we must also believe his holy word. This word of God is not only to be believed, but also to be obeyed, as is declared in the beginning of the sixth verse, where it is said, 'Add not to his words;' that is to say, neither utter nor practise anything contrary to the will of God revealed to thee. For he doth not add to God's word that delivereth truly the sense of the Scripture, but he that transgresseth God's law, or addeth his own carnal reason to the Lord's commandment. For these two causes thou art not to add to God's word, the one, 'that he reprove thee not,' the other, 'lest thou become a liar;' that is to say, lest the Lord pour on thee those most fearful plagues and punishments which he hath threatened unto those that shall add to his word; and again lest thou commit a most heinous sin, even to be a false witness concerning God. It is treason to corrupt or falsify the prince's coin; what high treason must it needs be then to counterfeit or corrupt the pure word of God? Let us then learn to be content with the simplicity of God's word in all things, neither adding thereunto our own inventions or

customs, nor pursuing or joining together with it our own vanities or wickedness. Let the Lord's reproving of Saul for sparing of Agag, and his destroying of Nadab and Abihu for offering of strange fire, make us afraid. It were a folly to add anything to the Scripture, seeing it is of itself altogether perfect and sufficient. It were great impiety and a manifest lie to publish that in the name of God which God never spake, which they do that teach false doctrines, and so by delivering that which they never received from God, add to the Scriptures. Wherefore the papists do in vain serve God, when they do add unto his most holy word, and teach for doctrines the traditions of men, yea, and falsify not only the writings of the ancient fathers, but the very Scriptures.

Ver. 7. *Two things I request of thee; forbid them not from me so long as I live:*

Ver. 8. *Remove far from me vanity and lying speech: give me neither poverty nor riches, (but) feed me with food convenient for me:*

Ver. 9. *Lest being filled, I lie, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest becoming poor, I steal, and abuse the name of my God.*

These verses contain a prayer which Agur made unto the Lord, wherein we are to observe the preface which he useth unto the Lord before that he poureth out his mind before him, and the petitions which he maketh to him. In the preface this holy man of God first sheweth unto him that he earnestly desired at his hands two things especially, as most needful for the salvation of his soul and the discharge of his duty. For although he begged many other things at God's hand, yet he did usually and most fervently put up two suits of great importance into the court of the Lord. Secondly, He declareth that he desireth to enjoy the two things for which he prayeth, not for a day or a year, but for ever. This he doth, for that he well knew and considered, that if God should withdraw his grace from him but for a moment, his estate would be very miserable. The petitions or suits which Agur maketh unto the Lord are two: the one, that the Lord would preserve him from sin; and the other, that he would give him convenient food. 'Remove far from me vanity,' saith he, 'and a lying speech;' that is to say, keep me by thine Holy Spirit from all ungodli-

ness and unrighteousness, which is vanity, and especially from hypocrisy and telling of untruths, which is a double iniquity. He doth not in this petition simply request that he may be free from all sin, but that he may not be led into temptation in such sort as that sin or Satan should have dominion over him, and cause him to walk after the flesh. The second request which Agur maketh unto God is contained in these words, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me;' that is to say, bestow on me, O Lord, that portion which thou, as mine heavenly Father, hast cut out for me, and appointed in thy decree to be my daily bread, in such sort as that it shall be convenient for my body and for my soul, and no hindrance, but a furtherance, unto me in thy service. Give me this my daily bread and convenient food, O Lord, and give me not riches, that is, inconvenient or hurtful wealth, neither yet poverty, that is, inconvenient and hurtful want. After this sort every one of us is to pray both against poverty and riches, and also for convenient food, even as our Saviour himself teacheth us, when he willeth us to say, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' In the ninth verse Agur expresseth unto the Lord the reason and the end why he desired him neither to give him poverty nor riches. The reason is, saith he, 'Lest being filled I lie, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest becoming poor I steal, and abuse the name of my God;' that is to say, O Lord, I beseech thee withhold such abundance from me as, being more than food convenient for me, would through my corruption bring me first to transgress thy laws without any conscience, which is nothing else but lying or walking in error, and secondly, to blaspheme and not acknowledge thy majesty. And again, O Lord, withhold such extreme want from me as, being less than food convenient for me, would draw me first into theft, and afterward into perjury or dishonouring of thee by mine evil conversation; for as exceeding wealth causeth rebellion and blasphemy, so extreme want causeth stealing and perjury. To pray after this sort against poverty and riches, for the dangers of sinning and offending God, is a thing not only lawful but very needful.

Ver. 10. *Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be charged with some crime.*

A profitable precept is given in the former part of this sentence, and a reason thereof is rendered in the latter. 'Accuse not a servant unto his master.' Complain not rashly nor falsely of the words or deeds of one of low degree unto one that is his governor or lord. Great offences are not to be concealed, but light offences are not to be revealed. It is not wisdom to provoke or offend the least or poorest in the world, and it were great cruelty to cause him to be beaten or sorely handled whose estate is a grief and affliction of itself. The reason why thou art not to accuse a servant to his master is, 'Lest he curse thee, and thou be charged with some crime;' that is, lest he complain to God or to some man against thee, and so cause the Lord to punish thee, who is a revenger of all wrong; or the court of justice to correct thee for thine offence. For he that is accused is wont to pour forth all the evil that he knoweth of his accuser; yea, and sometimes to lay that to his charge which he never did.

Ver. 11. *There is a generation which even curse their father, and do not bless their mother.*

Ver. 12. *There is a generation clean in their own eyes, although they have not been washed from their filthiness.*

Ver. 13. *There is a generation whose eyes are very haughty, and whose eyelids lift up themselves.*

Ver. 14. *There is a generation whose teeth are swords, and their cheek-teeth knives, to consume the poor out of the earth, and the needy from amongst men.*

Four crooked and wicked generations and kindreds of sinners, as it were, are in these four verses rehearsed and described. The first stock is of those that are notable rebels, who even curse their father, and bless not their mother. Of this sort are all that rise up against such as be in authority; and namely ungracious children, who not only in heart wish evil to their parents, but in words revile them. It is a great sin to reproach any, be he never so base or never so small a friend; but to defame and deface those who bear the Lord's person, and who are the authors and preservers of their lives that rail upon them, this must needs be a horrible impiety and iniquity. The second generation is of those who are clean in their own eyes, although they have not been washed from their filthiness. These are such hollow-hearted hypocrites, who, remaining in the dung of error and filthiness of this

life, think yet that they hold the truth and are regenerated by God's Spirit ; for being blinded, either by natural ignorance or wilful malice, they see not their errors, neither yet lay aside their wickedness. Of this sort are the heathen, the papists, and all carnal protestants. The elect have in them divers frailties and infirmities, but they are so washed by the blood of Christ, and by the Spirit of God, from the filthy dung of natural corruption and wilful rebellion, that the pollutions thereof have no dominion over them. Of the third kindred are those proud peacocks, 'whose eyes are very haughty, and whose eyelids lift up themselves.' Such affections as are in the hearts of men, such motions will also be in their eyes, which are the glasses or windows of the mind. Now the motions of the eye in arrogancy are, to look upward and to behold high and lofty things ; hence it is that all who are high-minded have haughty eyes, and by disdainful looks bewray the arrogancy of their spirits. Look upon them who are puffed up, either in regard of their beauty, or wealth, or knowledge, and you shall see that their eyes are not lowly and gentle, but very lofty and scornful. The last company or generation of wicked people are they 'whose teeth are swords, and whose cheek-teeth are knives, to consume the poor out of the earth, and the needy from among men.' These are those cruel and bloody oppressors, who by their accusations or tyranny destroy and devour poor men, even as lions and wolves, with their long and strong teeth, eat up and consume the silly sheep and lambs. Of these the prophet complaineth in the psalm whenas he saith, 'I am among the huge lions ; I lie among the firebrands, even among men whose teeth are spears and arrows, and whose tongue is a sharp sword,' Ps. lvii. 5. Unto these huge lions, whose teeth are so sharp and so mighty, St John in the Revelation, chap. ix. 8, resemblenth the persecutors of the church. The Lord deliver his church, both now and ever, in all places, from the rage and cruelty of such ugly and bloody beasts !

Ver. 15. *The horse-leech hath two daughters, Give, give. There are three things which are unsatiable ; yea, four, which do not say, There is enough :*

Ver. 16. *The grave, and the womb shut up ; the earth which is not satisfied with waters ; and the fire, doth not say, Enough.*

The natural properties of sundry creatures are herein set down, not only to make the works of God known unto us, but to picture out before our eyes the nature of concupiscence. The first of the creatures here described is the horse-leech, which is said to have two daughters, 'Give, give.' The horse-leech is a worm which useth to keep in ponds or puddles, and is such a greedy bloodsucker, that when once she hath begun to draw blood from man or beast, she leaveth not the skin, whereunto she cleaveth fast, until that her belly be full of blood. The daughters of the horse-leech are the two forks in her tongue whereby she sucketh, or rather, give, give, that is, unsatiable desire and continual craving ; for the Hebrews by a borrowed speech call the effects, affections, and properties of things, the sons and daughters thereof, as may appear by these and such-like phrases as are usual among them : the son of death, the son of the night, the son of the bow, the son of the quiver ; and again, the daughter of Zion, the daughter of the eye, the daughter of the voice, the daughter of the song. The second creature here noted to be unsatiable is the grave, which hath his very name of craving, the greediness whereof hath before been declared in this book, chap. xxvii. 20. The third is the womb which is shut up, that is to say, the barren woman, who by reason that she hath no children, doth exceeding covet so great a blessing, but yet never conceiveth, by reason that her womb is closed up. The fourth is the dry and sandy earth, which being by nature like a sponge, and being scorched with the heat of the sun, drinketh up great showers of rain, in such sort as that within a short time no remembrance of them are to be seen, and it gapeth for more. The last unsatiable thing here mentioned is the fire, which saith not, There is enough. Every one knoweth that a little fire is able to consume whole houses, yea, whole woods, yea, whole kingdoms. We use to say in our common speech that fire and water have no mercy. These properties and operations of the creatures here mentioned are well-known, and are also natural. Let us take heed that our desires and lusts be not inordinate and unsatiable. God hath called us to live soberly and moderately in this present world, and hath willed us to be content with food and raiment. Let us then take heed that we be not like the horse-

leech in thirsting after blood, nor like the grave in seeking other men's goods, nor like the barren womb in unconveniency, nor like the earth in earthliness of mind, nor, finally, like the fire in hot consuming rage and indignation.

Ver. 17. *The eye that mocketh his father, or despiseth the wrinkles of his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick out, and the young eagles shall eat up.*

The destiny of wicked children is herein revealed. In the former part of this sentence their fault is shewed, in the latter their punishment is set down. One property of the lewd child is, that with his very eye he mocketh his father, and that he despiseth the wrinkles of his mother. For seeing some frailty by his father, he scorneth him therefor, as Ham did Noah; or perceiving the weakness or crookedness of his mother, he contemneth her as an old doting fool. Such a scornful eye 'the ravens of the valley shall pick out, and the young eagles shall eat up.' For as it was a seat and instrument of an abominable sin, so it shall principally be revenged and most horribly plagued. This threatening is executed upon ungracious children, when they, being condemned for some wicked fact, or slain in the wars through God's just judgment, are not buried in the earth, but lying thereon, or hanging in the air, the greedy fowls seize on their carcases, and the young ravenous birds, which are most hungry and lusty, devour their eyes. It is also fulfilled when troubles of this life betide ungracious youths, or tyrants oppress them, who are the Lord's ravenous and devouring eagles. But when the fiends of hell shall have leave to pick at their souls, and the torments of hell shall take hold on their bodies, then shall this threatening be fully accomplished, and then shall their disobedience be thoroughly revenged. Oh fearful punishment prepared for wicked children! Oh ungracious children, worthy of so horrible punishment!

Ver. 18. *These three things are hidden from me, yea, these four I know not:*

Ver. 19. *The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent on a stone; the way of a ship in the deep sea; and the way of a man with a virgin.*

There are divers things in the world very hard to be attained or found out, but these four here set down are hardest of all others. After that an eagle is once flown away, no eye can see her, neither can

any foot overtake her, by reason that she flieth so high and so swiftly. After that a serpent hath rolled down from a high hill, or glided upon a stone, her way cannot be found out, for that neither any print of her body doth remain, neither doth she go on forward directly, but crookedly windeth and turneth hither and thither, neither doth she shew herself in some open place, but creeps into some deep hole of the ground. After that a ship hath sailed in the sea the passage thereof cannot be found out, by reason that the waters wherein it floateth come together, and it is driven by the winds, sometimes this way, and sometimes that way. The way of a man with a virgin which is kept close under the government of keepers is as secret and as hard to be found out as any of these; for after that he hath once taken charge of her, or purposeth to keep her safe as a peculiar treasure, he keepeth her within-doors, and locketh her fast, in such sort as that strangers cannot have access to her when they will, nor a sight of her at their pleasure. Now, if that at any time he carrieth her abroad upon occasion, then he doth this so closely that none knoweth almost when or whither he goeth. To conclude, by might and main he holdeth her so fast that an eagle which flieth may as soon be gotten as she may be by those obtained whom he thinketh unworthy to match with her. Thus is this sentence expounded by some of the learned; and that it must be understood to this effect the Hebrew word *Gnabna* plainly declareth, which neither here nor anywhere in the Scriptures signifieth either a married wife or one that goeth only for a maid, but a close and chaste virgin.

Ver. 20. *Thus is the way of an adulteress; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no evil.*

The way of the virgin, as in the verse going before hath been shewed, is not to be found out. The way of the adulteress, as here now is declared, is full of cloaking and colouring of wickedness; for she eateth, that is to say, she committeth folly; she is like those that eat stolen bread in dark corners; but when she hath thus eaten, she wipeth her mouth—that is to say, she so dealeth that no sign of her wantonness doth appear. Conceiving great boldness in this respect, that no sign of her unchastity doth appear, she saith, 'I have done no evil;' that is to say, I have not committed any wantonness.

The adulteress doth colour her wantonness the more carefully because she is married, and may cover it from the eyes of men the more easily because she may father her misbegotten children upon her husband; but certainly the Lord, who seeth those things that are done in secret, and especially hateth them who defile their bodies, will in the end lay open her folly, and revenge her lewdness most severely.

Ver. 21. *Under three things the earth is moved, yea, under four which it cannot bear :*

Ver. 22. *Under a servant when he reigneth ; and a vile person when he is filled with meat ;*

Ver. 23. *Under an (hated) woman, when she is married ; and under an handmaid when she is made heir to her mistress.*

As there are four secret things in the world, so there are four firebrands thereof, and intolerable burdens of the earth. Two sorts of men there are by whom great troubles arise, and again two sorts of women. First, A servant when he reigneth causeth great mischiefs and inconveniences in a land ; for he that, being of a low condition and slavish disposition, playeth the tyrant when he is advanced into a high place, neither spareth the people under him, nor by them ordinarily can be liked or well brooked. Secondly, The vile person, who fareth deliciously and hath abundance of all things, despiseth the poor, neigheth after other men's wives, and behaveth himself most beastly and devilishly, whereby great offence and hurly-burly ariseth in the commonwealth. Thirdly, When a married woman is hated by her husband, whether it be for her ill-conditions or for any other causes, and because she is hated, is either unkindly dealt with or put away, then thereupon springeth much envy, sorrow, and strife, especially if another be loved by her husband besides her, or more than her. Last of all, When the handmaid is made heir to her mistress, great variance and iniquities hereby is caused ; for if the mistress, being cast out of doors, the maid succeedeth in her place, she behaveth herself so proudly and stoutly that neither servants, nor children, nor the husband himself can oftentimes abide her. If she remain in the house together with her mistress, and be in better favour with her master than she, then these two dames can never but be at variance.

Ver. 24. *There be four small things of the earth, yet they are wise, yea, very wise :*

Ver. 25. *The pismires a people not strong, which yet prepare their meat in summer ;*

Ver. 26. *The hill mice a people not mighty, which yet make their houses in a rock ;*

Ver. 27. *The locusts have no king, which yet all march on in a flock ;*

Ver. 28. *The spider, which catcheth hold with her hands, and is in princely palaces.*

The natural properties of certain creatures are herein described, to the end that thereby we should receive moral instructions. First, The ants, which are poor silly worms, by the instinct of nature forecasting times to come, in summer, when the weather is fair, and corn is on the ground, provide for winter, when storms arise and the fields are bare. These little creatures may teach and admonish men to gather the food of their bodies and souls with care and labour, when the opportunities shall best serve thereunto. Secondly, The hill mice, which are certain little beasts whereof was great store in Syria, like partly to a mouse and partly to a bear, have indeed neither strength of limbs nor weapons to defend themselves, but this wit they have, that they dig holes in mountains and stony places, thereunto to fly in time of danger, and therein to lay their young ones safely. If the weak and contemptible mice have such wisdom to provide so well for their own safety and their young ones, and to choose so fit a place for their purpose, and so strong a castle for their refuge, much more should men have this reason to make their estate by all good means as secure and strong as is possible, but especially to choose almighty God to be their rock and refuge. Thirdly, The locusts, which are not grasshoppers, but certain flies with long legs, whereof there was great store in the east countries ; albeit they have no captain to lead them, yet have such reason not to single themselves asunder, which would be dangerous, and such love of concord, which is most comfortable, that they march all in a company, as it were in battle array, and strengthen themselves by flocking in infinite heaps. These may teach warriors to go forth against the enemy in orderly troops, and brethren to live and dwell together at unity. Last of all, The spider is a poor creature, which maketh cobwebs very painfully and very curiously,

yea, she spinneth and frameth her threads and webs so finely and cunningly, as that men wonder at them, and they seem to be like to the tents of emperors. This base creature may teach us this wisdom, not to be bunglers or slubberers in our works, but to be exact in our trades, and labour so as to excel therein, that we may do those works which may be commendable and admirable.

Ver. 29. *These three things order well their going, yea, these four things are comely in their pace :*

Ver. 30. *An aged lion most valiant among the beasts, which returneth not back for fear of any ;*

Ver. 31. *An horse which hath his loins girt up ; and a goat ; and a king, against whom none riseth up.*

As in the former verses four schoolmasters of wisdom have been commended to us, so now as many patterns of comeliness are presented to our view. The first of these is the lion, which going to any place trembleth not by the way, nor flieth back though he see the elephant, or any like beast, but proceedeth on forward with a valiant courage. The second is the horse, which, having his loins girt up, not only pranceth it gallantly, but courageously, and swiftly rushing into the battle, as the Lord himself testifieth in the book of Job, chap. xxxix. 22, goeth not back at the sight of the sword, nor is troubled at the shrill sound of the trumpet. The third is the goat, who, being the ringleader of the flock, not only walketh before the same with a certain stateliness, but with cheerfulness in the sight of the rest first climbeth up the craggy rocks and mountains. The last is a king, against whom none riseth up, or on whom a most honourable guard of his officers attendeth ; before whom the enemies quake, for whom the subjects pray, and unto whom all that are under his jurisdiction yield obedience. Now, inasmuch as these patterns of comeliness are propounded to this intent, even to teach both magistrates and ministers, and all sorts of people, to deal orderly in matters, and to walk seemly in their callings, let us in our several standing-places carry ourselves in all gravity, maintain our dignity, and shew our magnanimity.

Ver. 32. *If thou hast been foolish in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought some evil, put thine hand to thy mouth.*

Ver. 33. *For as the pressing of milk draweth out*

*butter, and as the wringing of the nose draweth out blood : so the pressing of anger bringeth forth strife.*

It is not good, as herein is shewed, either for princes or private persons, to proceed in any evil action, or to provoke any unto wrath. There are two sorts of sins, whereof the one is outward, the other inward transgression. 'If thou hast been foolish in lifting up thyself,' if thou hast outwardly sinned through pride, in deed, or in word, 'or if thou hast thought evil,' yea, if thou hast only conceived some mischief in thy mind, 'put thine hand to thy mouth,' be silent, and repent from the bottom of thine heart. Proceed not in evil doings, but turn over a new leaf. Truly there is no man but he offendeth sometimes both God and his neighbour. It is indeed great folly so to do, because sin draweth heavy judgments upon him that committeth it, and because a woe belongeth to him that giveth offence ; but repentance always findeth mercy, and salveth up the wounds which sin maketh. Wherefore the counsel here given by the wise man is very good, to wit, that he which falleth through pride, should rise again to repentance. To move every one to cease from evil, and to abstain from urging his neighbour too much by injury unto impatiency, Agur setteth down in the last verse the great hurt which will arise by so doing. 'For as the pressing of milk draweth out butter, and the wringing of the nose draweth out blood, so the pressing of anger bringeth forth strife.' Every country man knoweth that the continual beating of the churn so severeth the thinner milk from the thicker cream, that of this cream it causeth butter to arise ; again, every child knoweth that the hard and vehement rubbing of the nostrils, causeth blood to fall down and to issue out of them ; but few or none consider that too much stirring in an offensive matter causeth in like manner brawling and fighting. Yet nevertheless, as the wise man here teacheth, so it is, that lawing and warring will as certainly arise by provoking, as butter will by churning, or blood by wringing of the nose. For there is none so mild or patient, but if he be too much provoked, he will revenge himself. And as we see that iron is long in heating, but when it is once hot it burneth extremely ; so a patient nature is full of long-suffering, but being too much incensed, it is fierce in revenging. Where-



fore, to conclude this point and this chapter, let us not provoke one another to wrath by bitter speeches or offensive actions, but rather, if we have offended any, let us seek to pacify them, and by kindness to draw goodwill and favour. See an example in Asahel, 2 Sam. ii. 21.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 1. *A gathering together of the words of king Lemuel, wherewith his mother instructed him.*

This chapter consisteth of two parts—the one the title, the other the discourse itself. In the title, which is contained in this entrance thereof, two persons are specified, the one Lemuel; the other, the mother of this Lemuel. Solomon is called Lemuel, by taking away the first letter of his name in Hebrew, to wit, *Shin*, and by adding to the latter thereof the word *Et*, which signifieth God. This name was given unto Solomon by his mother, that thereby he might be put in mind that as his parents had dedicated him to the Lord, so the Lord had promised to be his father. The sentences set down in this chapter are called the words of king Lemuel, not for that they were uttered by him, but for that they were committed by him to writing, whereas now he was a king. They are, then, not the words of Solomon, but of Solomon's mother; but who she was it remaineth now to be inquired. It is manifest that the mother of Lemuel was Bathsheba, who, indeed, once fell most grievously, but afterward unfeignedly repenting, she walked in the fear of the Lord—a testimony whereof we have in that care which she had of informing her son therein, which how notably she did may appear in the precepts following in this chapter.

Ver. 2. *What, my son? and what, O son of my womb? and what, O son of my vows?*

The title of this chapter being ended, the discourse itself followeth, which containeth partly a preface, partly sundry precepts. The preface, comprehended in this verse, declareth how Bathsheba used three reasons to persuade or allure Solomon unto the receiving of her instructions. The first reason is taken from the bond of nature: 'What, my son?' This argument may thus be concluded: A son ought to obey his parents; thou art my son, thou oughtest therefore to obey me. The second is drawn from the right of

desert: 'What, O son of my womb?' Thus it may be framed: He which hath been bought most dearly ought to obey most dutifully; thou hast cost me much pain, thou oughtest then, with all reverence, to hearken to my voice. The third is derived from the rule of piety or religion: 'And what, O son of my vows?' It may thus be made plain: He for whose welfare sacrifices have been offered and promises made unto the Lord from time to time, is tied in conscience to obey that person in lawful things who hath made and performed such solemn vows in his behalf; thou art he for whom sacrifices have been offered, and I am she who hath made such vows; conscience, then, bindeth thee to hear and regard my precepts.

Ver. 3. *Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to them who cause kings to be destroyed.*

The preface being finished, certain precepts now follow, wherein Bathsheba partly informeth Solomon how to carry himself in the government of the commonwealth, and partly directeth him as concerning the estate of a private family. The former kind of instruction is of two sorts, the one shewing what vices Solomon is especially to shun; the other declaring what duties he is to practise. The former vice from which Bathsheba dissuadeth her son, is fornication. 'Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to them who cause kings to be destroyed.'<sup>1</sup> In that she willeth not to yield his strength unto women, she sheweth that fornication will not only dull his wits, but weaken the constitution of his body. In that she calleth strange women those who cause kings to be destroyed, she declareth that they do much hurt, not only to the persons of the princes, but to their states and crowns also.

Ver. 4. *Far be it from kings (Lemuel), far be it from kings to bib in wine; and from princes to desire strong drink.*

Ver. 5. *Lest they drink, and forget the decree, and change the judgment of any that are afflicted.*

Ver. 6. *Give ye strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto them that are bitter in heart.*

Ver. 7. *Let him drink that he may forget his affliction (or poverty), and remember his misery no more.*

The second vice from which Bathsheba dissuadeth

<sup>1</sup> See the root of this precept, Deut. xvii. 6. The same kind of speech, 1 Cor. vi. 18. See examples of the truth hereof in Hamor, and Shechem, and in David.

Solomon is drunkenness, whereof she speaketh in these words, 'Far be it from kings, O Lemuel,' &c. The use of wine is not forbidden princes in these words, but the abuse or immoderate use thereof, from which, as private persons should be far off, so especially magistrates.<sup>1</sup> Great cause there is why rulers, above all other people, should take heed of bibbing in wine, 'lest they drink and forget the decree,' &c. ; seeing, otherwise, they being overshot, may so for the time lose their wits, as that they neither can remember the written law nor discern the truth. Rather, then, 'give ye strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto them that are bitter in heart.' In this verse is declared that strong drink, which is poison to princes, is a medicine to the afflicted. The sense of it is this, reach out a large cup of comfortable drink to that party who, by reason of famine, or weakness, or weariness, is at death's door. Bestow, also, a good cup of wine, which creature maketh glad the heart of man, on him who, in consideration of his losses or crosses, is swallowed up with extreme sorrow. 'Let him drink, that he may forget his affliction, and remember his misery no more.' Let him who, by reason of some outward adversity, is ready to perish, take a plentiful draught of strong drink, that being therewith refreshed he may not think of the matter of his affliction. Moreover, afford a large cup of wine to him who is inwardly troubled in mind, that by this means the thorn of grief which pricketh his heart may wholly, or in some part, be pulled out. It is far from the intent of the Spirit of God to allow excess or carousing in any, neither doth the doctrine confirm or warrant the corrupt custom of offering strong drink either to malefactors drawn to execution, or to sick persons labouring on their death-beds for life, at which time they ought to be most sober and watchful. Only these instructions tend to declare that some, as, namely, those who are in extreme adversity, cannot only bear a large quantity of strong drink without hurt, but receive much good thereby, which, being taken in the same measure by some in prosperity or authority, would utterly overthrow them, or make them unfit to follow their calling.

Ver. 8. *Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all the children of destruction.*

<sup>1</sup> See a precept of this kind, Lev. x. 9 ; 1 Tim. iii.

Ver. 9. *Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the afflicted and the poor.*

The virtue which Bathsheba would have her son especially to remember, in the course of his government, is here specified and commended by her unto him. See Exod. xxii. 23. 'Open thy mouth for the dumb.' Speak boldly in the behalf of the oppressed, who because they cannot or dare not plead for themselves, may well be called dumb, Jer. xxiii. 6 ; Prov. xxiv. 10, 11. 'In the cause of all the children of destruction.' Maintain the cause of all who are wronged, neither only of those who are unjustly pursued, but of those who, deserving no such matter, are condemned or near to be executed. 'Open thy mouth, judge righteously,' &c. Minister justice courageously and indifferently to every one, but especially maintain the cause of the fatherless, widow, stranger, and poor person.

Ver. 10. *Who shall find a virtuous woman ? for her price is far above the pearl.*

Bathsheba cometh now to describe and commend a good housewife. Her most rare excellency is shewed in this verse. By demanding the question she declareth that many find beautiful and rich women, but few a good or godly wife, who is a special gift of God. By comparing a virtuous woman with pearls, she insinuateth that she is not only a rare, but an excellent blessing of the Lord ; for it is well known that precious stones or pearls are in great account among all people. Moses praiseth the rivers of paradise by the precious stones which therein are found. John resembleth the pillars of heaven unto precious stones, and the gates thereof unto pearls. In the garments of Aaron the Lord would have divers precious stones placed, to the end they might be most precious and glorious. Thus much then here is shewed, that an honest matron is a singular jewel, and the glory of a family.

Ver. 11. *The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoil.*

Ver. 12. *She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.*

Herein is shewed how the virtuous woman be-  
haveth herself toward her husband, who is the chief  
in the family, or among those with whom she is  
conversant. 'The heart of her husband trusteth in  
her.' Her husband, whether he be absent or pre-

sent, never doubteth either of her chastity, or of her secrecy, or of her care in looking to her family. 'And he shall have no need of spoil.' Moreover, he shall not want any necessaries, or through poverty be compelled to rob or spoil abroad, because this good matron will fill his house with plenty of all things needful or delightsome. 'She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.' The virtuous wife is constant in her love toward her husband. In youth, in age, in prosperity, in adversity, in sickness, in health, she doth what good she can unto him in his body, his soul, and his estate. She provideth such food as may nourish him, she stirreth him up to serve God, she saveth his goods as much as is possible; she lowereth not on him with her looks, she crosseth him not in her words, she vexeth him not by her deeds. If she know anything which will please or profit him, about that she goeth with all speed; if she perceiveth aught that will offend or hurt him, that she avoideth and shunneth with all care.

Ver. 13. *She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh it cheerfully with her hands.*

The labour wherein this good housewife exerciseth herself is specified in this sentence. 'She seeketh wool and flax.' She doth occupy herself in those works which, as they are proper to her sex, so are they profitable for her family, inasmuch as wool and flax being trimmed and perfected, serve to make coverings and clothings. 'And worketh it cheerfully with her hands.' She not only prepareth the matter of work, but laboureth herself with a delight and courage.

Ver. 14. *She is like the ships of merchants; she bringeth her food from afar.*

Herein the painfulness and providence of the virtuous woman is painted out by a very fit similitude. As then merchant ships carrying forth some one commodity to foreign countries return thence bringing home sundry others for it, so she sending out or selling her cloth, therewith buyeth corn, oil, and spices, and by her wisdom bringeth into her house the things which, growing in other shires or counties, came from afar. Thus she is fraught as full of necessary provision as any vessel on the sea is with wares.

Ver. 15. *And she riseth whilst it is yet night, and*

*giveth the portion to her household, and the ordinary to her maids.*

First. Here the watchfulness of the good matron is commended.<sup>1</sup> 'She riseth whilst it is yet night.' She is stirring betimes in the morning, even before the light, being unlike to the nice dames of these days, who soak in their beds till noon oftentimes. Secondly, Her humanity or equity towards her servants is praised. 'She giveth the portion to her household, and the ordinary to her maids.' Albeit she raiseth up her servants betimes to work, yet she is not cruel towards them, but giveth them their food in due season. Householders and rulers in old time did not give their servants so much food as they would devour, but they gave to every one a certain portion of bread and meat.

Ver. 16. *She considereth a field, and getteth it; and with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.*

Now Bathsheba declareth how a good housewife increaseth her substance by all good means. 'She considereth a field, and getteth it.' She by her diligent labour having gotten money or money worth, after due consideration of everything bargaineth for a parcel of ground, whereby great commodity may redound unto her, inasmuch as land being well tilled bringeth forth corn and much good fruit. 'And with the fruit of her hand she planteth a vineyard.' Moreover, by the gain of her labour she purchaseth a vineyard, which, being a precious possession, she setteth it with most choice plants. She is then unlike to those Jezebels, who by wicked means draw unto themselves or their husbands poor men's fields and vineyards, 1 Kings xxi.

Ver. 17. *She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.*

Herein is shewed after what sort the painful wife followeth her business. 'She girdeth her loins with strength,' &c. As one ready to run a race, or to wrestle with a champion, she flieth about her work, and setteth on it with a courage. Her garments hang not loose about her, but she tucketh them up that she may be the more nimble. She is then unlike to many nice dames, who will set their finger to no work, nor scant stir about the house.

<sup>1</sup> This vigilancy is often commended in the saints, as in Abraham, Gen. xxii., and in Joshua, chap. iii. To this duty householders are exhorted, 1 Tim. v., Col. iv. 1. See Gen. xvi. 1, 1 Chron. xvi., for proof hereof.

Ver. 18. *She tasteth that her merchandise is good : her candle is not put out in the night season.*

As before the virtuous woman hath been commended for her early rising, so now she is praised for her late sitting up about her work. 'She tasteth that her merchandise is good;' she findeth by experience that her selling of cloth is profitable. 'Her candle is not put out in the night season;' for this cause she sitteth up late at her work, being loath to lose any time.

Ver. 19. *She putteth her hands to the wheel, and her hands handle the spindle.*

As before this painful matron was brought in dressing and carding her wool and flax, so now she is presented to our view spinning and perfecting the same. This work is most agreeable to that sex, most needful for the family, and may be followed at all times, for which causes it is not by women to be neglected.

Ver. 20. *She openeth the palm of her hand to the poor, and stretcheth out her hands to the needy.*

The virtuous matron is commended now for her liberality. 'She openeth the palm of her hand to the poor;' she giveth plentifully to those who want, 'and stretcheth out her hands to the needy.' Moreover, she frankly reacheth out her alms to those who are in necessity.<sup>1</sup> She is then unlike to those saving cribs among us now-a-days, who will rather see the poor members of Christ perish than bestow a penny on them.

Ver. 21. *She feareth no hurt to her family through the snow ; for all her family is clothed with double.*

The wise matron is here praised for her forecast. 'She feareth no hurt to her family,' &c. She provideth aforehand shift of warm and thick clothes for all under her roof or government, that they may be harnessed against the extreme cold of winter.

Ver. 22. *She maketh herself carpets (or coverlets) ; fine linen and purple is her array.*

Now the good housewife is commended for her furnishing of herself with ornaments meet for her degree. 'She maketh herself carpets,' &c. Of the wool and flax which she got at the beginning, she worketh and prepareth store of comely coverings for board and bed, and garments for her body. Fine linen and purple were the richest attire in ancient

<sup>1</sup> So should all do, Eph. iv. ; so did Abigail, 1 Sam. xxv. ; and Dorcas, Acts ix.

times, as may appear in that it is said of the rich man in the Gospel that he was clothed in purple and fine linen. God disalloweth not in women decent apparel, no, nor rich attire, so that they keep themselves within their degrees, and be of a lowly mind. But if they be proud, or love gay garments, God will give them a sackcloth instead of a silk gown, and rags instead of their starched and painted ruffs, Isa. iiii.

Ver. 23. *Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth with the elders of the land.*

The praise of the virtuous matron is herein enlarged, by the care which she hath of providing comely apparel and rich ornaments for her husband. 'Her husband is known in the gates,' &c. Her husband also shineth as a star in those costly and curious robes which she by her cunning hath made for him, in regard whereof also he is the more noted, spoken of, and revered in the place of judgment, where he sitteth on the bench with the other rulers of the country. For in old time women especially were exercised in making and working of garments, who have a gift given them by the Lord that way, so that oftentimes they excel men in needlework. In old times also judgments and contracts were exercised and kept, not in the market-place, as among us, but in the gates of towns or cities, as appeareth in divers places of the Scripture, Ruth iv. 8 ; Gen. xxiii. 8 ; 2 Kings vii. 17.

Ver. 24. *She maketh sheets (or lawn, or cambric) and selleth them, and giveth girdles to the merchants.*

Bathsheba now reporteth that the good housewife contenteth not herself only with preparing of garments for the use of her servants, for her own use, and for her husband's use, but that she maketh comely ornaments to sell, to the end she may enrich her estate. The Hebrew word translated sheets, doth not only signify any such fine linen as lieth on the bed, but any linen vesture which men wear, or fine cloth wherein the body is enwrapped when the life is departed out of it, Judges xiv. 13. This is then a thing praiseworthy in householders, and namely in the mistresses of families, when they will not only have a care to save, but set to their hand to get a penny, as we say.

Ver. 25. *Strength and honour is her clothing, and she laugheth at times to come.*

The virtuous woman is herein affirmed to be

inwardly decked with sundry gifts of the Holy Ghost, as with garments.<sup>1</sup> 'Strength and honour is her clothing.' Courage or concupiscence, together with comely behaviour, consisting in sobriety, chastity, and suchlike virtues, are, as it were, her spiritual apparel. She endureth all labours and adversities constantly, and without shrinking. Again, she carrieth herself in all meekness, modesty, and, as it were, with a grace in all her actions. 'And she laugheth at times to come.' She is secure as concerning the losses or crosses which in time to come may befall her. She feareth not the danger of child-bearing, or death, or the day of judgment. Yea, on the contrary side, she rejoiceth to think what rewards of her pains she shall receive in the end. Even as then a valiant soldier, putting on him strong and bright harness, marcheth boldly in the field, not fearing the spear nor sword of the adversary; so she, albeit a woman, yet taking to her the courage of a man, yea, being armed with the whole armour of God, is patient in enduring present afflictions, and secure as touching troubles to come. Let then Christian women deck themselves with modesty and sobriety, rather than with frizzled hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly attire. Let them be afraid of no terror, considering that as, if they continue in the faith and in sobriety, they shall be saved even in the state of bearing of children; so it is a thing praiseworthy in them who, by constitution of body, are weak, and by disposition of mind timorous, to be so sanctified by grace, and fortified by God's Spirit, as to endure all things to the glory of God, and to fear nothing which God hath forbidden to fear.

Ver. 26. *She openeth her mouth in wisdom, and the law of grace is in her tongue.*

The virtue whereby in this verse the holy matron is praised, is the right guiding of her speech. 'She openeth her mouth in wisdom.' She talketh not rashly, indiscreetly, or unseasonably of matters, but prudently and soberly.<sup>2</sup> 'And the law of grace is in her tongue.' Moreover, she speaketh not of toys or of trifles, but of faith, of repentance, of the fear of God, and such other duties and points of religion.

<sup>1</sup> See like sayings, 1 Tim. xxix.; 1 Pet. xxxiii. See the same phrase in the same sense, Ps. xciii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See examples in Abigail, Sarah, Esther, the Queen of Sheba, Mary, Elisabeth, and Priscilla.

This is that whereof the apostle Paul speaketh, when in his epistle to Titus he requireth of Christian matrons that they instruct the younger unto sobriety, to be lovers of their husbands, and lovers of their children, Titus ii. 3. There are many of this sex who are so far off from uttering gracious speeches, that, as if that Satan reigned in their tongues, they continually pour out blasphemies, lies, and evil words of all sorts. But some again there are who abstain from such corrupt communication, yea, who take delight in talking of matters of religion, but yet howsoever the law of grace is in their tongues, yet they open not their mouths in wisdom; for they talk of good things without a grace, or otherwise than becometh them, yea, they do nothing almost but talk, not being able to keep silence when they should.

Ver. 27. *She overseeth the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.*

The virtuous matron is in these words further commended for her faithful discharging of her duty in her calling and house. See a precept to this intent, 1 Tim. v. 14. 'She overseeth the ways of her household.' As her mouth is seasoned with grace, so her eyes are watchful to see what every one doth, and to look that nothing be lost which ought to be saved. She is resembled here unto one who, standing in his hatch, moveth his eyes hither and thither to see who is coming and who is going. But here also this is to be observed, that she goeth not about to spy what is done in other men's houses, but that she overseeth her own. Moreover, as is added, 'She eateth not the bread of idleness.' She is not an idle beholder of the ways of her family, but she setteth her hand to labour herself among the rest. Thus she eateth not the bread for which she never took pains, but the food of labour or travail, as the prophet speaketh in the psalm, Ps. cxxvii. And surely he that will not labour ought not to eat, 2 Thes. iii.

Ver. 28. *Her children rise up, and call her blessed: her husband also praiseth her, saying,*

Ver. 29. *Many women have done virtuously, but thou surmountest them all.*

Ver. 30. *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.*

Ver. 31. *Give her of the fruits of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.*

In this conclusion of the chapter, Bathsheba de-

clareth that the virtuous matron of whom she hath spoken all this while getteth exceeding praise unto herself by her wise governing of her house. 'Her children rise up, and call her blessed.' Her sons and daughters come up to preferment and honour, by reason that they have been well brought up by her. Moreover, they testify in word and deed that their mother hath not neglected them, nor let them do what they list in their youth, but brought them up in the fear of God and good qualities, for which cause they extol her. On the contrary side, many children now-a-days curse their mothers, because they cockered and spoiled them when they were young; and indeed well may they, seeing, for want of good education in tender years, they come in elder age to misery and shame. 'Her husband also praiseth her, saying.' Neither only do the children of the godly matron commend her, but her husband also praiseth her, concluding her in thought and speech to be the only paragon of the world. 'Many women have done virtuously, but thou surmountest them all.' To the end that the husband of this virtuous wife may highly extol her according to her desert, herein he compareth her with other women who have very well discharged their duties, but not so worthily as she. 'Many women,' &c. Thou surpassest even the most excellent matrons that ever lived. 'Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.' Now the loving husband, to the end that he may shew that a virtuous woman is only and truly worthy to be praised, compareth her with those whom the multitude is wont most to esteem and commend. 'Favour is deceitful;' comeliness of personage or any outward grace is as a shadow which hath no substance; moreover, it causeth men oftentimes to go astray; finally, under it many vices are hid. For divers that have well-favoured countenances have ill-favoured conditions. 'Beauty is also vain.' A good colour or a good complexion is but a fading flower, which by sickness, sorrow, age, and death, withereth and decayeth. Indeed these two things are of themselves good things, for the which sundry women in the Scripture are praised, but they are but frail good things, and inferior to the fear of God. For this cause it is furthermore said, that 'a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.' The

garland of praise is only to be set on her head who believeth in God, repenteth of her sins, practiseth good works, and walketh faithfully in her calling.<sup>1</sup> 'Give her of the fruits of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.'

In the last verse husbands are provoked to recompense the pains of a virtuous wife with due rewards. 'Give her of the fruits of her hands.' Even as in games and conflicts the conquerors are both rewarded with some prize, and praised openly in some public assembly by a solemn proclamation; so let the virtuous matron hitherto spoken of enjoy and receive necessaries and worldly goods which she hath gotten with her own hands, and let her be commended, not in corners alone, but in public places. Divers husbands are so wicked and dogged to their wives, that although they be not only well given, but so painful and gainful in their callings, that they even by their industry maintain all, yet they keep them oftentimes without a penny in their purse, neither will they afford them a good word. But howsoever such miserable wretches deal thus hardly with their faithful and painful yoke-fellows, yet such virtuous women as dutifully walk in their callings shall be commended always by the good, and rewarded by God himself. But to conclude this point, and therewith this treatise, the praise of a virtuous woman is here so largely set down, and so exactly handled, not only to the end that Solomon might be directed in the choice of his wife, but the price of such a jewel being made known to all, the godness of the Lord in giving such a helper to man may appear the more cheerily; such a helper I say as may not only greatly further him in the affairs of this life, but as a fellow-heir of glory, go hand in hand with him into heaven, there to remain for ever with Christ, in whom is neither male nor female, who is the head of man, as man is the head of the woman, but the head of Christ is God, even the Father; to whom, with the Son and the Spirit, three incomprehensible persons in one infinite essence, be all praise and glory, both now and for evermore. Amen. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> As Sarah, Gen. xii.; Rebecca, chap. xxiv.; Rachel, chap. xxix.; Abigail, 1 Sam. xxv.; Esther, chap. ii. See the same judgment of the Spirit of God, 1 Pet. iii. 3; 1 Tim. ii. 9. Such women were Hanna, Deborah, Mary, and Elisabeth.

# A BRIEF EXPOSITION

WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS UPON THE

# WHOLE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

BY

JOHN COTTON.

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M,DCCC.LXVIII.





## JOHN COTTON.

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‘**W**ERE I master,’ says Cotton Mather, ‘of the pen wherewith Palladius embalmed his Chrysostom, the Greek patriarch, or Posidonius eternised his Austin, the Latin oracle, among the ancients; or were I owner of the quill wherewith among the moderns Beza celebrated his immortal Calvin, or Fabius immortalised his venerable Beza; the merits of John Cotton would oblige me to employ it in the preserving his famous memory.’ As we are neither possessed of one or other of these famous biographical pens, nor have space at our disposal for aught like a worthy memoir of this good divine, we shall content ourselves with extracting the record of the principal events of his life from the memoir by his grandson, of which we have just quoted the opening sentence.

John Cotton was born in the town of Derby on the 4th of December 1585. His father was Mr Roland Cotton, a lawyer, whose practice is stated to have been to urge his clients to endeavour to effect reconciliation or compromise, rather than have recourse to litigation. Both he and his wife were notably pious. Their son John shewed such precocity as a boy, that at the age of thirteen he was admitted into Trinity College, Cambridge. Circumstances having prevented his obtaining a fellowship in Trinity, he was transferred to Emmanuel College, and in that college was successively fellow, tutor, head-lecturer, dean, and catechist. Here he became famous for learning and eloquence; but for a time these were unsanctified. The account of the change that passed upon his soul we give at length in the words of his grandson.

‘Hitherto we have seen the life of Mr John Cotton, while he was not yet alive. Though the restraining and preventing grace of God had kept him from such outbreakings of sin as defile the lives of most in the world, yet like the old man, who for such a cause ordered this epitaph to be written on his grave, Here lies an old man, who lived but seven years; he reckoned himself to have been but a dead man, as being alienated from the life of God, until he had experienced that regeneration in his own soul, which was thus accomplished. The Holy Spirit of God had been at work upon his young heart, by the ministry of that reverend and renowned preacher of righteousness, Mr Perkins; but he resisted and smothered those convictions, through a vain persuasion, that if he being a godly man, it would spoil him for being a learned one. Yea, such was the secret enmity and prejudice of an unregenerate soul against real holiness, and such the torment which our Lord’s witnesses give to the consciences of the earthly-minded, that when he heard the bell toll for the funeral of Mr Perkins, his mind secretly rejoiced in his deliverance from that powerful ministry, by which his conscience had been so often beleaguered; the remembrance of which thing afterwards did break his heart exceedingly. But he was at length more effectually awakened, by a sermon of Dr Sibbs, wherein was discoursed the misery of those who had only a negative righteousness, or a civil, sober, honest blamelessness before men. Mr Cotton became now very sensible of his own miserable condition before God; and the arrows of these convictions did stick so fast upon him, that after no less than three years disconsolate apprehensions under them, the grace of God made him a thoroughly renewed

Christian, and filled him with a sacred joy, which accompanied him unto the fulness of joy for ever. For this cause, as persons truly converted unto God have a mighty and lasting affection for the instruments of their conversion; thus Mr Cotton's veneration for Dr Sibbs was after this very particular, and perpetual; and it caused him to have the picture of that great man in that part of his house where he might oftenest look upon it. But so the yoke of sore temptations and afflictions, and long spiritual trials, fitted him to be an eminently useful servant of God in his generation.'

It is worthy of very special note that the first sermon that he preached after his conversion was the means of the conversion of Dr Preston, who in his turn became one of the great lights of the university, and contributed more perhaps than any one else to the revival of vital religion, and the study of theology, which made the seventeenth century so notable an era in the history of religion and the Church in England.

Shortly after, Mr Cotton was elected minister of Boston, and despite of difficulties thrown in his way by a 'corrupt' mayor and an anti-puritan bishop, he was quietly settled in that town. Shortly after this he took the degree of Bachelor of Divinity, and on the recommendation of 'holy Mr Baynes,' he married Elizabeth Horrocks, who was a very great help unto him in the service of God.

For twenty years Mr Cotton lived in Boston, and laboriously and faithfully discharged the duties of an evangelist and a pastor; and with such a blessing that there was a great reformation in the town, 'profaneness was extinguished, superstition was abandoned, religion was embraced and practised among the body of the people; yea, the mayor, with most of the magistrates, were now called puritans, and the 'Satanical party' was become insignificant.

During a great portion of the time that he spent in Boston, he was amongst those who scrupled at the 'vestments' and the 'ceremonies,' and absolutely declined their use. For this he was for a short time silenced, but the storm blew over; and probably on account of the high esteem in which he was held by all classes in the place, he was long left unmolested. It seems to have been not without reason that the Bostonians esteemed him, for his renown as a preacher and a pastor contributed even to the worldly prosperity of the town. 'The inhabitants of Boston observed that God blessed them in their secular concernments remarkably the more through his dwelling among them; for many strangers, and some, too, that were gentlemen of good quality, resorted unto Boston, and some removed their habitations thither on his account; whereby the prosperity of the place was very much promoted.'

His indefatigable labours in the Lincolshire fens at last began to tell on his health. A tertian ague lay upon him for a whole year. This led to his leaving Boston for a change of air. He recovered, but his wife died. Shortly after, 'Mrs Sarah Story, a virtuous widow, very dear to his former wife, became his consort, and by her he had both sons and daughters.'

It would seem to have been while he was still absent from Boston that he was accused to the High Commission Court. Powerful intercession was made on his behalf by the Earl of Dorset, but to no purpose. That nobleman intimated to him that 'if he had been guilty of drunkenness, or uncleanness, or any such lesser fault, he could have obtained his pardon; but inasmuch as he had been guilty of nonconformity and puritanism, the crime was unpardonable; and therefore, said he, you must fly for your safety.' This advice, after much prayerful consideration and consultation with friends, he

resolved to follow. Accordingly he was proceeding in disguise to a seaport, with the view of proceeding to Holland ; but, meeting a friend, he was advised to go to London, and there, in conference with many pious ministers, the resolution was formed that he should rather go to New England. The paragraph containing the account of his voyage we must give without abridgment :

‘The God that had carried him through the fire of persecution, was now graciously with him in his passage through the water of the Atlantic Ocean, and he enjoyed a comfortable voyage over the great and wide sea. There were then three eminent ministers of God in the ship, namely, Mr Cotton, Mr Hooker, and Mr Stone, which glorious triumvirate coming together, made the poor people in the wilderness, at their coming, to say, That the God of heaven had supplied them with what would in some sort answer their three great necessities : Cotton for their clothing, Hooker for their fishing, and Stone for their building. But by one or other of these three divines in the ship, there was a sermon preached every day, all the while they were aboard, yea, they had three sermons or expositions, for the most part every day : of Mr Cotton in the morning, Mr Hooker in the afternoon, Mr Stone after supper, in the evening. And after they had been a month upon the seas, Mr Cotton received a mercy, which God had now for twenty years denied unto him, in the birth of his eldest son, whom he called Seaborn, in the remembrance of the never-to-be-forgotten blessings which he thus enjoyed upon the seas. But at the end of seven weeks they arrived at New England, September 3, in the year 1633, where he put ashore at New Boston, which in a few years, by the smile of God, especially upon the holy wisdom, conduct, and credit of our Mr Cotton, upon some accounts of growth, came to exceed Old Boston in everything that renders a town considerable. And it is remarkable, that his arrival at New England was just after the people there had been by solemn fasting and prayer seeking unto God, that inasmuch as they had been engaging to walk with him in his ordinances according to his word, he would mercifully send over to them such as might be eyes unto them in the wilderness, and strengthen them in discerning and following of that word.’

Dr Cotton’s share in the legislation of the colony is matter of history. He probably overstrained the application of the Jewish law ; but undoubtedly for a time virtue abounded and good order reigned, and the blessing of God rested upon the colony. For a time, too, the churches flourished, and there were daily added unto the church such as should be saved. But tares were sown amongst the wheat. An antiuomian party sprang up ; and Dr Cotton, through the greatness of his charity thinking no evil, was supposed to favour them, and had no little difficulty in vindicating himself from the foul reproach. It seems perfectly clear that there was no foundation for it ; but it was propagated in various books and pamphlets, and the echo of it may be occasionally heard till this day.

In 1641, Cotton received an invitation from many distinguished men to return to England. It was even contemplated to send over a ship on purpose to bring him back : but the design was abandoned ; and as he had spent twenty years in the old English Boston, so he spent twenty in the New England Boston.

At length he caught a cold, which became inflammation of the lungs and asthma, and he had a presentiment that his course was done. He feared not death, for the rod and the staff of the Lord the Shepherd comforted him.

‘While he thus lay sick, the magistrates, the ministers of the country, and Christians of all sorts resorted unto him, as unto a public father, full of sad apprehensions at the withdrawal of such a public blessing ; and the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, while he had strength to utter the profitable conceptions of his mind, caused them to reckon these their visits the gainfullest that ever they had made. Among others, the then President of the College, with many tears, desired of Mr Cotton, before his de-

parture, to bestow his blessing on him, saying, I know in my heart they whom you bless shall be blessed. And not long before his death, he sent for the elders of the church, whereof he himself was also an elder ; who having, according to the apostolical direction, prayed over him, he exhorted them to feed the flock over which they were overseers, and increase their watch against those declensions which he saw the professors of religion falling into ; adding, I have now, through grace, been more than forty years a servant unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and have ever found him a good master. When his colleague, Mr Wilson, took his leave of him with a wish that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, he instantly replied, God hath done it already, brother. He then called for his children, with whom he left the gracious covenant of God, as their never-failing portion ; and now desired that he might be left private the rest of his minutes, for the more freedom of his applications unto the Lord. So lying speechless a few hours, he breathed his blessed soul into the hands of his heavenly Lord, on the twenty-third of December 1652, entering on the sixty-eighth year of his own age ; and on the day, yea, at the hour of his constant weekly labours in the lecture, wherein he had been so long serviceable, even to all the churches of New England. Upon Tuesday the twenty-eighth of December he was most honourably interred, with a most numerous concourse of people, and the most grievous and solemn funeral that was ever known perhaps upon the American strand ; and the lectures in his church the whole winter following, performed by the neighbouring ministers, were but so many funeral sermons upon the death and worth of this extraordinary person, among which the first, I think, was preached by Mr Richard Mather, who gave unto the bereaved church of Boston this great character of their incomparable Cotton, Let us pray that God would raise up some Eleazar to succeed this Aaron ; but you can hardly expect that so large a portion of the Spirit of God should dwell in any one, as dwelt in this blessed man ! And generally in the other churches through the country, the expiration of this general blessing to them all did produce funeral sermons full of honour and sorrow ; even as many miles above an hundred as Newhaven was distant from the Massachusetts Bay, when the tidings of Mr Cotton's decease arrived there, Mr Davenport with many tears bewailed it, in a public discourse on that in 2 Sam. i. 26, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan, very pleasant hast thou been unto me." Yea, they speak of Mr Cotton in their lamentations to this day.

In a time when there were giants upon the earth, the mental and spiritual stature of John Cotton was notable. His piety, his learning, his ministerial laboriousness, were all gigantic. Two centuries and a half have not obscured his fame : by his published writings he still speaketh ; and his name is held in veneration in that city and state whose character he so materially contributed to mould, and to which he gave a distinctness which all the attritions of a quarter of a millennium have not obliterated.

TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

MR GEORGE CABORN, MAYOR;

WITH THE ALDERMEN, COMMON COUNCIL, MINISTERS, AND THE REST OF MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,  
OF BOSTON IN LINCOLNSHIRE.

DEARLY BELOVED,—The large interest which I have long enjoyed in your favour, and which you must ever have in my heart, hath emboldened me to prefix your names to this piece; and with the more confidence of your acceptance, because in it an address is made to you at once by two, who sometimes were together your ministers in the gospel of Christ: by the ever-to-be-honoured Mr Cotton in the book, and by my unworthy self in the review and dedication of it; both now removed from you. The one, first to a remote part of the world, there to plant churches, and thence (after that happy work done) to heaven; the other, to some more public service nearer hand, in which I humbly crave the best help of your prayers, as you are constantly remembered in mine; and that with more strength of affection, whilst I oft call to mind those most comfortable days, in which I enjoyed the happiness of joint-ministry with so able and faithful a guide, and both of us so much satisfaction and encouragement from a people so united in the love both of the truth and of one another. I cannot read what Paul writeth of his Thessalonians, (the first chapters of both his epistles to them,) but I think I read over what we then found in Boston. They were then very happy days with you, when your faith did grow exceedingly, and your love to Christ's ordinances, ministers, servants, and to one another abounded. Although your town be situate in a low country, yet

God then raised your esteem very high, and your eminency in piety overtopped the height of your steeple; your 'name was as an ointment poured out,' Cant. i. 3; and your 'renown went forth, for that beauty and comeliness which God had put upon you,' Ezek. xvi. 14. How it is now with you, at this distance I cannot so well judge; only I desire you would please seriously to consider whether the new wine or the old be better, and ever think that best which doth not intoxicate us into staggering from the truth, and falling off from one another; but so cheereth the heart, as yet maketh us humble and meek, and keepeth us close to God, his truth, ordinances, the power of his grace, and all those duties in which the faithful among you formerly walked with God, met with peace, and at last reached heaven. Such a frame of spirit and way, I can remember, was sometimes among you; and as oft as I remember it, I desire not to forget to praise God for it. 'What was then your blessedness?' Gal. iv. 15. And what then was, I humbly beseech God may so revive and continue, that you may prove a little model and foretaste of that blessed church, which God will 'make an eternal excellency, and a joy of many generations,' Isa. lx. 15. This you and I have the more cause to desire and endeavour, because,

1. *Miserum est fuisse*, it is a great misery to have it said of us, that we have been happy. *Fuimus*

*Troes, fuit Illum*, was but a sad word; and it is a sadder thing for the Sun of righteousness, which had sometimes shone gloriously upon any particular church or people, at last to set in a cloud. If such a light come to be darkened, 'how great is that darkness!' After the light is put out, the room proveth darker than if it had never been set up; and the remembrance of those former pleasant things, once enjoyed, but afterwards lost, added to, and aggravated the church's lamentation, Lam. i. 7.

2. And yet such a lamentable condition hath been and may be the lot of such places and people, which God sometimes hath highly honoured, when they have grown fat and wanton together. Bethel hath proved Beth-aven, Hos. x. 5; in after times we find young profane mockers in Bethel, 2 Kings ii.; and scornful neuters in Peniel, Judges viii. 8. Go to Shiloh, Jer. vii. 12; think of the sometimes glorious churches of Asia. As empires and kingdoms, so particular churches have had their periods. I have sometimes on purpose visited some places where God had before planted his church and a faithful ministry, to see if I could discern any footsteps and remembrances of such a mercy; and 'lo, they were all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof is broken down,' Prov. xxiv. 31.

3. And which is more sad, in some of them never, in others very hardly built up again; God proving severe when we grow wanton. And so, as he removeth the candlestick, Rev. ii. 5, when we play or fight by the light of the candle set up in it, so he is very hardly induced to light it again in that place where it hath once been wantonly or frowardly put out. There are more hopes of recovering a particular person fallen, by virtue of an everlasting covenant made with him, although he may go halting to his grave, and never here again rise up to his former comforts and enlargements; but a particular church or people (unless it be that of the Jews, who in the great jubilee after their rejection shall again return to their former possessions, Jer. iii. 1, 12-14, and viii. 4) cannot claim the like privilege of such a covenant. The ark never returned to the same place from whence it was in a way of judgment removed; and the glory of the Lord, when, after its gradual removes, was at last quite gone from the first temple,

was not fully restored in the second, till Christ's first coming; nor will it be in this their rejection, till his second. I think there will be found very few instances of God's presence and ordinances, long enjoyed by a people, and after abused and rejected, if thereupon lost, easily, if at all, restored. The 'faith once delivered to the saints,' Jude 3, is not wont to be received or lost the second time. The reason is, because a jealous God can least endure, upon trial made of him, to be slighted in that wherein he would most commend to us his special love, and ever accounts the rejecting of such special tokens of it as a renouncing of himself: 'They have not rejected thee, but me,' 1 Sam. viii. 7. And as the husband in the law plead'd some uncleanness in his wife, when he put her away, Deut. xxiv. 1, so God makes account that we tell the world, that we have found iniquity in him, when we go far from him, and walk after vanity, and that he hath been a wilderness and land of darkness, when we prove lords, and will come no more at him, Jer. ii. 5, 31. Dear friends, he hath not been so to you, even your enemies being judges; and your own experience will bear witness for him, that his gospel, even in point of outward advantage, hath paid for its entertainment. These thick cords of love therefore, I hope, will bind you close to him, and strongly draw you off from whatever may be a means of drawing you away from him; and so, by your continuing to be planted in the house of the Lord, and by your still flourishing in the courts of our God, you will proclaim to all that he is upright, and that there is no unrighteousness in him, Ps. xcii. 13-15. These, dearly beloved, are my affectionate desires and hopes of you; and yet, in regard of the unsettledness of these times, and the wildness of many men's spirits in them, you will pardon me if I be 'jealous over you with a godly jealousy;' and that having this fit opportunity, I take the boldness, by 'putting you in remembrance' of what sometimes you were, 2 Pet. i. 13, to stir you up to keep warm your first love, Rev. ii. 4, 5, and to do your first works; to be watchful, and to strengthen the things that remain, especially if any be ready to die, Rev. iii. 2; to hold fast the form of sound words, 2 Tim. i. 13, whereto you have been formerly delivered, Rom. vi. 17, and to hold up the power of godliness;—

*In yourselves*, by the constant exercise of faith, repentance, self-examination and humiliation, self-denial and mortification, &c.

*In your public government*, by reviving your ancient care and zeal for the sanctifying of God's Sabbaths, countenancing his ministers and ordinances, and discountenancing whatever doctrines or practices are contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus, and the power of godliness.

*In your families*, by private prayer, singing of psalms, catechising your children and servants, training them up in God's fear, and restraining them from that pride, wantonness, and stubbornness which your faithful pastor (now with God) was wont much to complain of, and which in these looser times I wish you had not cause much more now to bewail.

Now the good Lord help you to stand up for God in your several places, and so serve your generation, Acts xiii. 36; that peace and truth may be in your days, 2 Kings xx. 19; that in them your sun may not go down, but when you are gathered to your fathers, in your hopeful and happy posterity it may rise with greater strength and glory, as drawing nearer to a more glorious day now approaching; that then another generation may not arise after

you, which shall not know the God of their fathers, Judges ii. 30, and so the ages to come may be to seek for *Sammium in Samnio*, old Boston in new. But on the contrary,

That your seed may be so known among the Gentiles, and your offspring among the people, that all that see them may acknowledge them to be the seed which the Lord hath blessed, Isa. lxi. 9.

That this may be the everlasting covenant which God shall make with you and them, that his Spirit and word shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever, Isa. lix. 21.

But that your congregation may be a Zion, which God hath chosen, and desired for his habitation; of which he may say, This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it,—is, and, God enabling me, shall be, the most hearty desire and prayer of him

Who desireth to have no dominion over your faith,

But to be a helper of your joy,

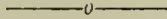
ANTHONY TUCKNEY.

*From St John's College in Cambridge,  
July 7, 1654.*





# A BRIEF EXPOSITION UPON ECCLESIASTES.



THIS whole book is a discourse not unseasonable for this country, wherein men, that have left all to enjoy the gospel, now, as if they had forgotten the end for which they came hither, are ready to leave the gospel for outward things; which are here lively and clearly demonstrated to be vanity, yea, vanity of vanities.

*Obj.* But were not something of Christ more proper for a minister of the gospel to handle?

*Ans.* The way to stir us up to seek after Christ, is to behold and be convinced of the vanity of all things here below.

When Eve brought forth *Cain*, she hoped she had got the promised seed, Gen. iv. 1, with iii. 15.

But when she saw, by his spirit and carriage, that she was deceived in him, she called her next son *Abel*, Gen. iv. 2, which signifieth *vanity*.

And so she must see all things to be, before she bring forth *Seth*, the father of the promised seed. Now *Abel*, or vanity, expresseth the state of all the creatures by the fall; and *Solomon* taketh up *Eve's* word, and amplifieth it, 'vanity, yea, vanity of vanities.' So this whole book is a commentary upon the state of corruption, Rom. viii. 20. A fit introduction to Christ in the Canticles.

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## CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.*

Ver. 2. *Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.*

The chief good of the sons of men, which the moral philosophers among the heathen sought after but found not, *Solomon* in this book truly and fully openeth to us. The philosophers being vain and wicked themselves, how could they find or teach the true chief good? But this wise and good king, upon his own experience, both found it himself, and taught us to find it after him.

The sum of his discourse standeth upon these two points: 1. That the chief good of the sons of men is not to be found in all the creatures under the sun, nor in men's labours and ways about them; for they are all vanity and vexation of spirit. 2. That it is to be found in the fear of God and keeping his commandments, chap. xii. 13.

These two verses contain, first, The title of the book; wherein the book is set forth, 1. By the author; 2. And he by (1.) His condition, *Cohemoth*. (2.) His lineage, *the son of David*. (3.) By his office, *a king*. (4.) The place of his government, in *Jerusalem*, ver. 1.

Secondly, The argument, or sum of his discourse, or at least of the former part of it, ver. 2. Wherein is set forth, 1. The condition of all things, by the adjunct of *vanity*, 'All is vanity.' And this vanity is amplified by many ornaments of rhetoric:—

1. A *hyperbole*, *vanity* itself for vain.

2. *Polyptoton*, *vanity of vanities*.

3. *Epizcuris*, (the like sound continued in the same sentence,) *vanity of vanities*.

4. *Anadiplosis*, (the same sound repeated in the end of one sentence, and the beginning of the other,) *vanity of vanities, vanity, &c.*

5. *Epanalepsis*, (the same sound repeated in the beginning of the sentence, and in the end,) *vanity*, &c., *all is vanity*.

6. *Anaphora*, (the same sound repeated in the beginning of the sentences,) *vanity*, &c., *vanity*, &c.

7. *Epistrophe*, (the same sound repeated in the end of the sentences,) *of vanities*, &c., *of vanities*.

8. *Epanodos*, (the same sound repeated in the beginning and midst, in the midst and end,) *vanity*, *vanity*, *vanity*.

9. *Numerus oratorius*, (the same number of syllables repeated in both sentences,) *vanity of vanities*, *vanity of vanities*.

10. *Climax*, (the same sound continued and increased by degrees,) *vanity of vanities*, *vanity of vanities*, &c.

11. *Paranomasia*, (the repeating of like sounds, yet somewhat differing.)

2. This confirmed by the testimony of *Cohemoth*, 'saith the Preacher,' ver. 2.

Ver. 1. *The words of Cohemoth*. Solomon had four names—Solomon, Jedidiah, Lemuel, Cohemoth, 2 Sam. xii. 24, 25; Prov. xxxi. 1, 4, and the text. This name, *Cohemoth*, is only given him in this book, when, after long experience of all earthly vanities, he in his old age speaketh to wean his people from them, and teacheth them the fear of the Lord for their chief good.

It is a participle of a verb out of use in the active voice, yet in the passive used to signify, *to be gathered*, or *assembled*; whence קהל, a congregation; קהלת, then, being a noun or participle of the feminine gender, may imply to us these three things:

First, Solomon's gathering himself to the church and assembling therewith, when yet his wives, and many other idolaters with them, assembled to the conventicles and synagogues of false gods.

Secondly, That in this true church assembled he was *anima concionans*, *in hæc verba*; he spake these words, or delivered them in the congregation, by word or writing, as a testimony of his repentance; which may also further appear if we consider,

1. What he saith by his experience of the dangerousness of enticing women, even his own, and of his deliverance out of their hands, as being beloved of God. Eccles. vii. 26-28.

2. The frame of the whole book, which speaketh sadly of the bitterness of all earthly vanities after his long experience of all of them in his old age.

Thirdly, That he delivered these things from his heart and soul, not out of any policy of state, to satisfy the people, Ps. lxxviii. 11; Isa. xl. 9.

So the feminine gender is expounded, Ps. xvi. 2.

*Use 1.* To persuade us of Solomon's repentance after his fall. Such as think he fell finally and totally are not only hereby refuted, but by all those arguments which prove the perseverance of the saints, which are many and impregnable; and besides, by such other arguments as more peculiarly concern Solomon himself; as,

1. Our Saviour's testimony that all the prophets are in heaven, Luke xiii. 28.

Now Solomon was a prophet, seeing the whole Scripture was penned by no other but prophets and apostles, 2 Pet. i. 19-21; Eph. ii. 20.

Balaam, though he prophesied, as did also Saul, yet neither of them were prophets—a spirit of prophecy rested not upon them, Joshua xiii. 22.

2. He is said to be loved of God, and therefore by God's own appointment to be named Jedidiah, 2 Sam. xii. 25.

Now God's love is the pledge, as of Jacob's election, Rom. ix. 13, so of Solomon's. God is not wont to give names to things but according as he findeth them, or purposeth to make them: 'Whom he loveth, he loveth to the end,' John xiii. 1. To say that was only meant in regard of not taking the kingdom from him and his posterity, as he did from Saul, is to wrest the text, which promiseth,

1. That he will be a father to him.

2. For his person, that he will not take his mercy from him.

3. For his kingdom, that it shall not be taken away.

*Use 2.* To teach us to accept this book with greater respect. The sun never shineth more gloriously than when it breaketh forth out of some dark cloud, nor the graces of God's Spirit than when they have overwrestled some cloud of temptations and sins, and break forth into repentance. So was it with David also in Ps. li.

*The son of David*; which he mentioneth in sundry respects.

First, It is honourable to be the son of a prince, Eccles. x. 17.

Secondly, It procureth the more reverence to a prophet to be the son of a prophet.

Thirdly, It is comfortable to be the son of a man after God's own heart, for the covenant's sake, Gen. xvii. 7; and especially of David, for the promise sake made to him and to his seed after him, 2 Sam. vii. 12-16.

*Use 1.* To procure reverent acceptance of the doctrine of this book for the penman's sake; for though it little skilleth what the pen be, of a goose or swan's quill, or raven's, yet when God delighteth to use such an instrument, so richly adorned with many privileges, it challengeth from us the more due respect. It is a book written by the eldest son of wisdom.

*Use 2.* To teach parents that send their children to the university, to seek to excel in eminency of grace, and love amongst men. It will add some lustre and credit to their children's ministry, as Zacharias and Elisabeth's godliness, Luke i. 6, did to John Baptist's, and David's to Solomon's.

*King in Jerusalem.* King, as having sovereign power of life and death; to whom it belonged to be as a head to counsel, and direct, and rule the people; to be also as a shepherd to feed the people with wholesome laws and institutions, and examples of good life, and to drive them from feeding in unwholesome pastures, upon unsavoury vanities.

*In Jerusalem.* The city of God, the mother church of Israel, then a faithful city, full of faithful and good people, though afterwards a harlot.

He doth not say, 'king of Israel,' as Prov. i. 1, but 'in Jerusalem,' intimating that his conversing in this faithful city, amongst so many good people, was some means the sooner to bring him to a sight of his sin, and to inditing and penning these words, which shew his repentance.

It could not be but that Solomon must needs read in the countenances of his people, when he came abroad to church and judgment-seat, and hear likewise by intelligence of his wise counsellors, how much the citizens of Jerusalem were grieved with his building idolatrous temples, and tolerating false worship in them; the which might well provoke him to a more serious sight of his sin, and to make mention of the city in the words that shew his repent-

ance. Besides, in a penitential discourse, the full latitude of titles is unseasonable.

*Use 1.* To shew us that God useth instruments of all sorts in penning the Scriptures, as well some kings, as David and Solomon; as some fishermen, as amongst the apostles; and herdsmen, as Amos; and priests, as Jeremiah; that all sorts might meet with style and phrase of speech meet for them.

*Use 2.* That it is no disgrace to any man, or to any man's children, to be preachers. Solomon and David, both kings and both prophets; yea, Solomon studying to teach the people knowledge, Eccles. xii. 9, 10. The angels, higher than the highest men, are 'all ministering spirits,' &c., Heb. i. 14.

*Use 3.* It is no unbeseeming office for kings to write good books, or to publish their repentance after their public sins, Ps. li.

*Use 4.* To let us see what a benefit it is for a minister or magistrate to live amongst good people. They naturally help one another to avoid sin, and to come out of it.

*Use 5.* To add still the more due respect to this book, penned by a king, and a king of the church of God.

*Use 6.* To teach penitents, not to affect the expression of titles or styles of honour at large.

Ver. 2. *Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.*

*Vanity of vanities, &c.* The logical and rhetorical resolution of these words is delivered above in opening the first verse.

*Doct. 1.* All things under the sun, whether creatures of God or labours of men, are altogether vain to the attaining of true happiness; or thus, are excessively, diversely, wonderfully vain. The chief things which men seek for in this life are vain in a threefold respect:

1. To find the chief good in them.
2. To satisfy the soul, Isa. lv. 2.
3. To make that good they are made for of themselves, Ps. xxxiii. 17.

For the gathering of this point from the true meaning of the text, compare this place with ver. 3, 14, and chap. ii. 3. In this sense Paul calleth all things loss, (dross, dung,) Phil. iii. 7, 8, to wit, not only without Christ, or in comparison of him, but for the attainment of Christ or true happiness.

The ground of this point may be most fitly shewed in opening the several acceptions of *vanity* in the Scripture, and observing how they all agree in all things in the world in this respect. Vanity is put for,

1. Unprofitableness, as here, ver. 2, 3; Mal. iii. 14; which agreeth to worldly things, Mat. xvi. 26, a man may have the whole world, and lose his soul; and then what profit did they yield him? Prov. xi. 4.

2. Emptiness, Ps. ii. 1; 1 Cor. iii. 20. Vain, that is, void of substance and worth and sufficiency. So Isa. xxxvi. 5, to which also agreeth Isa. xxix. 8, and lv. 2.

3. Lightness, Ps. lxii. 9; which is also true, Deut. xxxii. 47. The like may be said of all earthly things in this case.

4. Falsehood and lying, Ps. xii. 2, and iv. 2; which also holdeth here, Ps. xxxi. 6; Jonah ii. 8.

5. Frustration or disappointment of the end, Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2. Unless the Lord build and keep the house and city, the builder's and watchman's care will fall short of the end they aim at, and so the work is in vain, James i. 26; 1 Cor. xv. 14.

6. Frailty or inconstancy, vanishing away as smoke, Rom. iii. 20, 21; Ps. cxliv. 4; Isa. xl. 6-8.

7. Iniquity, 2 Chron. xiii. 7; Prov. xii. 11.

8. Folly, Job xi. 12; Prov. xii. 11.

Reasons of the vanity to those former ends:

1. From the end for which God made them—to wit, for us, not us for them, 1 Cor. iii. 22.

2. From their condition; they are corporal, temporal, and therefore cannot feed, much less satisfy an eternal spirit, Luke xii. 19, 20.

3. From the curse lying upon them since the fall, Gen. iii. 17.

Reasons of the repetition of this vanity, and the Holy Ghost's manner of speech in expressing this vanity:

1. To shew the excessiveness of the vanity of these earthly things.

Vanity implieth they are not only vain, but exceedingly vain; as vain as vanity itself.

*Vanity of vanities* is in the Hebrew a superlative form of speech, to set forth the highest vanity; as the song of songs, the most excellent song; the king of kings, the servant of servants, the chiefest king, the most servile servant.

2. To shew the multitude and variety of vanities heaped up in earthly things. There is a nest, as it were, of vanity in them; or, as Samson speaks in another case, Judges xv. 16, 'heaps upon heaps.'

3. For admiration. To shew the wonderful and strange vanity of these things, he breaketh forth into this exclamation, 'O vanity of vanities,' &c.

*Use* 1. To shew us what a great change sin maketh in the world: it doth, as it were, blast the virtue and beauty of the creature.

Time was, before sin entered, when God saw all the creatures to be very good, Gen. i. 31. Now, after sin had blown upon them, he looked upon them again, and all is vanity. Such a change will sin make in us, and in our counsels and courses.

*Use* 2. To shew us what a woeful change they make that sell their souls to commit sin for any earthly benefits, which are but vanity, Jonah ii. 8; Isa. v. 18. Temptations from earthly things may draw on sin like cart ropes, but they are the cart ropes of vanity. And so do they that change the ordinances of God for accommodations which are under the sun.

*Use* 3. To shew us the vanity of men beyond all creatures, Ps. cxix. 89. He for whose sake all the rest became vain, is much more vain himself, Ps. lxii. He is lighter than vanity, Isa. xl. 17.

*Use* 4. To teach us not to set our hearts on earthly things, Ps. lxii. 10, neither by,

1. Coveting them before we have them, Prov. xxiii. 4, 5.

2. Confidently trusting in them, or proudly rejoicing in them, when we have them, Job xxxi. 24, 25.

3. Grieving when we part from them, Job i. 21.

*Use* 5. To exhort us to lay up better treasure than these earthly vanities, Mat. vi. 19, 20.

*Use* 6. For a sign of trial of our repentance. Such as see nothing but glory and goodness in these outward things, Satan hath bewitched them, Mat. iv. 8. But such as see the extreme vanity of them have repented with Solomon here.

*Use* 7. To teach us it is no vanity to teach the vanity of the creatures in rhetorical elegancies. Here are many tropes of rhetoric used, so Rom. xii. 5, with these cautions:

1. That the rhetoric be suitable to the matter, grave and holy; else it is bastard rhetoric.

2. That it set forward the end of the discourse, to wit, to affect the heart with the sense of the matter in hand.

Ver. 2. *Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.*

In that Solomon sets the seal of his testimony to the vanity of all these earthly things, after the long trial of them, observe this :

*Doct.* They that have had most trial of all earthly comforts are most ready and best able to avouch the vanity of them.

Who could haste more to outward things than Solomon, and yet be more confident in avouching the vanity of them ?

*Reason 1.* Experience is a divine testimony, as being taken from the work of God, in the event of things coming to pass by providence.

*Reason 2.* Experience is of great authority with men, as being an argument more sensible, and less subject to ignorance or error.

*Use.* To shew us a broad difference of earthly things from spiritual and heavenly. Earthly things seem goodly and glorious, till we have them and good trial of them, and afterwards we find them altogether vanity ; but heavenly things seem vanity till we have them, and good trial of them, then seem they excellent and divine : no gain, no glory, no comfort like to that which they yield.

Before we leave this verse, let us remove a false collection which one maketh from this word—that reading is preaching, because Solomon calleth his book (though read) the Preacher.

But for answer, consider, 1. Solomon doth not call his book, but himself, the Preacher.

2. He might from hence collect that the preacher may deliver his sermon by writing, and so that writing may be preaching ; but that reading therefore is preaching followeth not. For in writing, a minister may and doth make use of spiritual gifts requisite in a prophet or preacher, to the exercise of his ministry, 1 Cor. xiv. 1 ; but not so in reading, which even a school-boy may perform, that never attained any spiritual gift at all.

Ver. 3. *What profit hath a man of all the labour which he hath under the sun ?*

*Labour under the sun* is labour taken about the creatures or things under the sun ; for the labour a man taketh for the favour of God, the fellowship of the blood and Spirit of Christ, &c., is labour for things above the sun. Whence such are said to converse in heaven, Phil. iii. 20, and to walk with God, Gen. v. 24.

*What profit.* To wit, towards the attaining of true happiness ; otherwise, in all labour there is some profit towards the helping of our earthly estates, Prov. xiv. 23.

This verse is an ἐπιμνησθῆναι, or dwelling upon the former conclusion, of the vanity of all things, delivered in the former verse, and here repeated in other words more plainly.

*Doct.* All the labour a man taketh, whether of mind or body, about the creatures under the sun, is altogether unprofitable towards the attainment of true happiness, chap. ii. 22, and iii. 9.

Reasons from the disproportion of these creatures to our happiness :—

*Reason 1.* All these creatures are under the sun, but our happiness is above it. Now, as water can never ascend higher, nor carry any other thing higher, than the fountain from whence it came, so neither can things below the sun carry us up to a condition above the sun.

2. These creatures are temporal, our happiness eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18.

3. These things are changeable and unsettled, but our happiness unchangeable.

*Use 1.* To wean us from immoderate labour after these things which cannot profit. It many times falleth out that those things which we labour most to avoid are the most behoveful to attainment of happiness, as afflictions, Ps. cxix. 67, 71.

*Use 2.* To stir up to labour principally for heavenly blessings, things above the sun, Isa. lv. 1-3 ; 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Ver. 4. *One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh ; but the earth abideth for ever.*

Ver. 5. *The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteneth to the place where he arose.*

That which Solomon taught us in the former verse, the unprofitableness of all labour about worldly things towards the attainment of happiness, he con-

firmeth in the rest of this chapter, and the rest which follow, by induction of sundry sorts of labours, wherein men usually weary themselves, but in vain. And first he beginneth with the vanity of the labour of the mind about the study of natural things, which in this whole chapter he sheweth to be unprofitable to the attainment of happiness, by two reasons.

1. The first taken from the want of such things as accompany true happiness—to wit, stability, satiety, newness, in natural things. The reason standeth thus:

The knowledge and study of such things as want stability, satiety, newness, is unprofitable to the attainment of true happiness; but the knowledge and study of such things, is of such things as want stability, satiety, novelty.

This want of stability he proves by the state,

1. Of bodies mixed of the four elements, which are generable and corruptible, come and go, ver. 4.

2. Of the four elements.

(1.) Of the sun, the chariot of fire, ver. 5.

(2.) Of the wind or air, ver. 6.

(3.) Of the water, ver. 7.

(4.) Only the earth standeth still in the midst of all these restless motions.

[1.] Partly as a centre about which these move.

[2.] Partly as a theatre upon which every generation cometh and goes, ver. 4.

Whence, though it be stable, yet we want stability in it, which is all one to us as if it were not stable.

Their want of satiety he sheweth, ver. 8.

Their want of novelty, ver. 9–11.

2. The second reason is taken from his own experience, ver. 12, to the end of the chapter.

*Doct.* 1. Such things as come by generation stand not at a stay, but pass away, (pass away by corruption,) Job xiv. 1; Ps. xlix. 7–9; Joshua xxiii. 14; 1 Kings ii. 2.

*Reason* 1. From the causes in nature whereof they are generated, which are the four elements, and they contrary one to another. Now, contrary things, being divided one against another, make the whole body of short continuance, one wasting another till all fail, Mat. xii. 25. Heat against cold, and moisture against dryness, work continually one against another, till all be consumed.

Besides, in living creatures the disproportion between *Calor naturalis* and *Humidum radicale*, causeth

dissolution; the food received breedeth not such kindly heat and moisture as is daily spent, but a more mild heat and more raw moisture.

*Obj.* How, then, could Adam's life be maintained for ever, if he had stood in innocency?

*Ans.* By the almighty power of God subduing and keeping these contrary qualities in a sweet temper and harmony, even by the same hand whereby he kept the wild beasts from preying upon the tame, allowing them to eat nothing but grass, Gen. i. 30.

*Reason* 2. From the curse which sin brought with it, even the bondage of corruption upon the creature, Rom. vi. 23, and viii. 20, 21. It is commonly said of the oak that it liveth three hundred years—growing one hundred, standing at a stay another hundred, and decaying the next hundred. The Holy Ghost recordeth of the patriarchs that they lived many hundreds, Gen. v.

Pliny out of Hesiod describeth nine ages to the crow, sometimes as much more to the hart, and yet three times as much more to the raven, *Nat. Hist.*, lib. vii. c. 48.

But yet all these, being compounded and generated of the four elements, do in the end return into them again by dissolution and corruption.

*Use* 1. To teach us (that which is Solomon's scope) that the study of these natural things is not available to the attainment of true happiness; for how should that which is restless (and, as Solomon's word is, full of labour) procure us settled rest and tranquillity, which accompanieth true happiness? The mind of man, as philosophers have observed, is somewhat assimilated into the nature of the object which it studieth and is conversant about: as mariners, who are conversant about winds, and seas, and storms, are more boisterous; shepherds and herdsmen more brutish; foresters more wild; butchers more bloody, &c. So the study of these restless creatures leaveth the mind more restless.

In particular, the study and knowledge of the passing away of one generation after another sheweth us our mortality and misery, and thereby yieldeth us grief and vexation, but no relief if we rest there.

*Use* 2. To exhort us to lift up our hearts to true wisdom, by the consideration of this unsettledness of our estates, Ps. xc. 10, 12; Deut. xxxii. 29.

Prepare for a change ; it is a-coming, Heb. xiii. 14 ; Micah ii. 10.

*Use 3.* To exhort to weanedness in our present condition, and contentment in all estates, 1 Cor. vii. 29-31.

*Use 4.* To exhort to fruitfulness in good things whilst we here abide, 2 Pet. i. 13-15.

*Doct. 2.* As one generation passeth away, so another cometh.

The sun setteth, and ariseth the same again ; trees may be cut down, and yet spring again ; not so we, but others come in our place, Job xiv. 7-10.

*Reason 1.* God will always have his church to call upon him in this world whilst the world standeth.

*Reason 2.* God will have the elder generations to instruct and govern the younger, and the younger to yield reverence and obedience to the elder, which cannot be unless one generation be coming on as another passeth away.

*Use 1.* To refute the Pythagorean dotage of returning of the same persons again many years after their death.

*Use 2.* To stir up the generations passing away to be helpful to the generation coming on, in good counsels, instructions, examples, &c., Ps. lxxi. 18, and lxxviii. 3, 4 ; Isa. xxxviii. 13, 19.

*Use 3.* To teach the younger sort, as they come after, so to make some benefit of their ancestors' going before, observing whatsoever was commendable in them and imitating it ; and eschewing whatsoever was evil and dangerous, Zech. i. 5, 6.

*Doct. 3.* Though one generation passeth away, and another cometh on, yet the earth abideth for ever.

As one harvest is gathered another cometh, yet the earth or soil still remaineth, standeth.

*Reason 1.* God's word establishing it, and that even upon nothing, Ps. xxxiii. 9 ; Job xxvi. 7.

*Use 1.* Against Copernicus's opinion of the revolution of the earth, and the standing still of the sun, Ps. xix. 5, and exix. 90. If the earth moved swiftly, when a man throweth a stone the same way the earth moveth he might easily overtake the stone before it fell ; or, it may be, standing still, the earth speedily moving would carry him so far as to be under the stone when it should fall.

*Use 2.* To moderate our desires after the earth and earthly things, which we must leave behind us,

and cannot carry away with us, 1 Tim. vi. 7, 8 ; Ps. xlix. 17.

*Use 3.* To reprove our unstaidness to stand in good ways, though the word of God have been as well spoken to us as to the earth, which yet standeth according to his word, Jer. v. 22, 23.

*Use 4.* To exhort to the building of our hopes of salvation upon God's word, which will establish them for ever when other grounds will fail us.

Ver. 5. *The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.*

Ver. 6. *The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north ; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.*

Ver. 7. *All the rivers run into the sea ; yet the sea is not full ; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.*

Ver. 8. *All things are full of labour ; man cannot utter it : the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.*

Ver. 9. *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be ; and that which is done is that which shall be done : and there is no new thing under the sun.*

Ver. 10. *Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new ? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.*

Ver. 11. *There is no remembrance of former things ; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.*

*Doct. 1.* The knowledge of such things as are full of labour, and empty of yielding satisfaction to the mind, and of variety or newness, is unprofitable to the attainment of true happiness.

This is the ground upon which Solomon buildeth the unprofitableness of the labour of the mind about the knowledge of natural things.

1. They are full of labour or restless motion, ver. 8.  
2. They yield no satisfying to the eye and ear, which are the senses of discipline.

(1.) The one by observation.

(2.) The other by instruction.

3. There is no newness or variety in them, which arguing would not hold unless this doctrine be pre-supposed as a ground.

Reason of it from the nature of such things wherein true blessedness standeth.

They are such as—

1. Are at rest; he maketh it our safety to rest in peace and tranquillity. Isa. xxx. 7, 15; the favour of God, the blood of Christ, the fellowship of God's Spirit, the word of promise, the covenant of grace and peace. But natural things, which are themselves in perpetual motion, they leave our minds restless.

2. Do satisfy the mind and heart of a Christian. His eye would ever see the favour of God and the light of his countenance shining upon him, his ear would ever hear the things belonging to his peace.

The eye or ear not to be satisfied with such or such things, implieth either,

1. That a man careth not to see or hear any more of them, as having enough of them, and yet would have something besides them, as being not contented with them. So it is meant here, Isa. lv. 1, 3.

But, on the contrary, in heavenly things, a man having true and full contentment in them yet desireth to partake more and more of them, John iv. 14; Mat. v. 6; Ps. xlii. 1, 2. For such things do yield true satisfaction to the eye and ear and taste, whenas a man is desirous always to see and hear and taste the same. And so is it in heavenly things—the more we taste of them, the more we desire them, and yet are fully satisfied and contented with them.

2. Secondly, That a man not having enough of that he seeth and heareth, would have more of it, and yet cannot attain it, and thereupon is vexed; as Aristotle, not fully comprehending the course of Euripus, is said to have cast himself into it: and so is it also meant here in sundry difficulties of natural things.

3. Thirdly, Are new, full of fresh and sweet variety of newness. To a new creature, behold all things become new, 2 Cor. v. 17—not only within him, new mind, new judgment, new conscience, new heart, new affections, (new joys, fears, griefs, cares, desires, &c.,) new speeches, new life; but also without him, new company, &c.

Yea, those things he busieth himself about they yield him continually new matter to be refreshed withal. The favour of God, the blood of Christ, the fellowship of the Spirit, the more they are heard or seen, the more novelty they are to us; the word, the

oftener read, still yieldeth us more knowledge, new comfort, &c. Paul speaketh not of the estate of glory, but of grace, when he saith, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, such things,' 1 Cor. ii. 9. The natural man never perceived them, (and therefore, as Paul reasoneth, the princes of this world could not devise such things to keep people in awe.) They are new when they are first perceived of the godly, and they feel a new, fresh, sweet savour in them as oft as the seeing or hearing of them is renewed, Lam. iii. 23.

*Use 1.* To wean us from placing our happiness in the study of the creatures. There is no rest in them, no satisfaction to the mind, no such newness as in those things wherein true happiness standeth. Some of the philosophers placed happiness in contemplation, (meaning of the creatures,) but sheweth they were deceived. Many a man thinketh that if he could attain to the knowledge and mystery of this or that trade, he should need no more good; but it is even with trades as with the creatures: they are full of labour, and yet empty of satisfying the mind—empty of newness.

*Use 2.* To exhort to the study and searching out of the favour of God, the blood of Christ, the grace of his Spirit, the word of God, &c. These will answer our hearts with rest, and fulness, and newness of comfort and contentment.

*Use 3.* For trial of our happiness, whether we have made right choice of it. If we bend our studies and labours upon things that are full of labour, and yet empty of satisfying the mind with contentment and newness, we have misplaced our happiness.

But if we find rest and satisfaction and newness in the things we are conversant about, it is a sign we have chosen heavenly things to place our happiness in—a right choice.

From the sun's motion, ver. 5, observe,

First, (against Copernicus,) That the sun standeth not still, but the earth, Ps. xix. 5.

Secondly, Against the opinion of such that do think the heavens and planets are moved by intelligences. The same is here said to arise and go down, to hasten, not to be carried or moved passively, Ps. xix. 5. The sun is said freely to run his course, or which is all one, to rejoice to run it.

Thirdly, The sun is endued with life, for whatso-



ever stirreth and moveth itself in his own place is quick and liveth.

There is a double life in things yet coming short of sense. 1. Vegetative, as the plants and herbs ; 2. Locomotive, as in the stars.

This also is implied in the order of the works of the creation. Where, proceeding from things less perfect to things more perfect, he mentioneth stars made the fourth day, and herbs and trees the third. The stars therefore, mentioned to be created after some living things, have in themselves a more perfect life.

From the wind's motions, ver. 6, observe, The freedom of the motion of God's Spirit, blowing where it listeth, John iii. 8.

From the motion of the rivers, ver. 7, observe, First, The original of fountains to spring from the sea.

Aristotle's reason to the contrary, that water coveteth to run to the lowest place—and if the water should have this vicissitude of course, from the fountains to the sea, from the sea to the fountains, then the same place should be higher and lower than itself—will not hold. For some parts of the sea are lower than the fountains, and into them the fountains send forth their streams to run ; other parts of the sea are as high, or higher, than the fountains, especially in great storms, when the waves seem to ascend up to heaven, Ps. cvii. 26. And they by secret channels another way send forth springs of water to feed the fountains.

Plato's *Barathrum*, in the hollow caverns of the earth, which he maketh to be the original of fountains, is hence also refuted, unless he derive the supplying of that *Barathrum* from the sea.

Secondly, That the earth, through which the sea-waters pass to the fountains, doth percolate and strain the salt out of them ; else, as the sea-waters are salt, so would also the fountain-waters be.

That some fountains of water are salt as the sea riseth from the openness of the pores of the earth between the sea and them, which is also the cause of the ebbing and flowing of some of them.

Thirdly, A pattern of thankful returning what we receive to the fountain that supplieth us ; as we receive all blessings from God, so let us return all to him.

From the motion of all these together, observe,

First, That all the elements abhor idleness ; the sun, (the chariot of fire,) the wind, the waters, are all in continual motion. And though the earth abide and stand, yet it is continually fruitful in breeding and nursing such things as abide upon it, and in it. An idle person, though made and fed of all these, is like none of these—he lazily sitting or lying still, whilst they continually move ; diligence in our calling hindereth not the happiness of the resting of our hearts in God.

Ver. 9. *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be ; and that which is done is that which shall be done : and there is nothing new under the sun.*

Ver. 10. *Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new ? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.*

Ver. 11. *There is no remembrance of former things ; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.*

In these words Solomon sheweth us the want of newness in these things under the sun, and from thence argueth the unprofitableness of the study or knowledge of them to the attaining of true happiness.

This want of newness, first, Is expressed in the end of the ninth verse, ' There is no new thing under the sun ; ' secondly, Is amplified, 1. By particular induction of that which hath been, and that which is done ; they both shall be hereafter, ver. 9.

Secondly, By an *ἐπιμνήθη*, dwelling upon the same point, affirming everything that now seems new to have been in old time, ver. 10.

Thirdly, By removing an objection which is secretly implied : If these things that seem new to us have been in old time, how cometh it we never heard of them before ? ver. 11 ; which is amplified by the like forgetfulness of things now in after ages, ver. 11.

The doctrine of the ninth and tenth verses may be opened in handling this point,

There is no new thing under the sun.

It may seem a paradox at first sight ; for it may be said, What is that which all men, like the Athenians, inquire after ; news ? If there be no new thing, Acts xvii. 21, why are men taxed for hunting after new fashions in apparel ? (especially Englishmen, as unfit to be suited as the changeable

moon.) If there be no new thing, will God again destroy the world with water? Gen. ix. 11. Was it a new thing for God to deliver the law with lively voice from heaven? Deut. iv. 32, 33. Was it not a new thing, or shall it be again repeated, the sun to stand still, or to go back ten degrees? Joshua x. 13, 14; 2 Kings xx. 11; a virgin to bear a son? Jer. xxxi. 22; Christ to be born, to die, to rise again, to ascend? the Holy Ghost to descend? the apostles to preach and write the New Testament? Are there not sundry inventions of art new? as guns, printing, and the use of the loadstone. Was not the gunpowder treason new, without precedent of former example?

To answer these, and such-like doubts, many interpretations and limitations of these words have been given, which are not worth the rehearsing; as that of Cajetan, conceiving Solomon to reason from the eternity of time, to argue the circular motion of natural bodies; and that alleged of Origen, touching Plato's great year, of 49,000 years, wherein he would have all the stars to come to the same position, and so all things to return again in the same course. But to touch only those which come nearer to the truth. Some have thought (amongst whom Jerome) that all things now done, were first in God's predestination; but though that be a truth, yet not pertinent here; for God's predestination is above the sun; and things done here according to it, are new still under the sun, as having never been done under the sun before; besides, God's predestination was not in old time before us, but before all time.

Others understand the words as denying new arts; but what will they say of the art of printing?

Others, as Pineda, understand it of no new happiness, nor any new way to attain it.

But Solomon seemeth to speak of the want of new objects to eye and ear, whence it cometh to pass that they are not satisfied, ver. 8.

Others, and that rightly, conceive him to speak of natural things, and their natural actions, *Avicen. sup. Q. 91, A. 1.*

For of these Solomon here discourseth, to prove that happiness cannot be found in the knowledge of these, because they are wanting in newness and variety. As if he should say, *Natura nihil molitur*

*novi.* Though upon this particular occasion he seemeth to reach further, in denying newness to the common affairs of men in the world.

For, ver. 11, he denieth remembrance of former things, which is not wont to be taken up about natural bodies, or the actions of them, but especially about men and their affairs.

And indeed in civil matters there be the like manners of men now as of old; the like causes and successes of war and peace, &c., whence the knowledge of history of former times is so much behoveful. So in church matters, like disposition of hypocrites, Mat. xv. 8, 9.

Like opposition to the truth by false teachers, 2 Tim. iii. 8; 2 Pet. ii. 1; like security, forerunning general judgments, Luke xvii. 26-30.

*Ans. 1.* For answer therefore to the former doubts, Solomon speaketh not of God's miraculous and extraordinary actions, whether of judgment or grace; such as the drowning of the world, the standing of the sun, the birth and death of Christ, the writing of the Scriptures, &c., 2 Pet. iii. 4-6.

*Ans. 2.* He speaketh of natural bodies, and the whole course of nature. Nature worketh now as from the beginning, *Natura nihil molitur novi*, but upon some accidental defect, or superfluity in the matter.

*Ans. 3.* The artificial inventions of men, though they be new sometimes at first, yet for the kind many of them have been before; and generally none of them continue new long, but wax stale and old like other things, Ps. cii. 26; Heb. viii. 13.

Only God our happiness is always the same, Ps. cii. 27; Heb. xiii. 8, and ever is new. Abraham's covenant is still the new covenant.

*Use 1.* To shew us the emptiness of the knowledge of the creature to bring us to happiness.

Where newness is wanting, sweetness and full contentment is wanting.

*Use 2.* To exhort to seek after the favour of God, the blood of Christ, the fellowship of his Spirit, the knowledge of the word, &c. These things yield a daily new freshness, 2 Cor. v. 17; Lam. iii. 23.

*Doct. 2.* Matters of former times are buried in forgetfulness.

*Reason 1.* Men's negligence to recount them, or to search after them.

*Reason 2.* Men's unthankfulness, not rehearsing them to posterity.

*Reason 3.* Emulation, envying the propagation of others' good name.

*Reason 4.* God's just judgment cutting off the memory of some persons and things from off the earth.

*Use 1.* Not to wonder though so many things seem new to us, which yet have been before, seeing former things are forgotten.

*Use 2.* Not to seek our own glory in this or that good work, to be talked of when we are gone; for we and our works shall be forgotten.

*Use 3.* To exhort to godliness, which bringeth an everlasting good name, Prov. x. 7; Ps. cxii. 6.

Ver. 12. *I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.*

Ver. 13. *And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things which are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith.*

Ver. 14. *I have seen all the works that are done under the sun: and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

Ver. 15. *That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.*

Now followeth, in these verses, the second argument whereby Solomon proveth the vanity and unprofitableness of the study and knowledge of God's works in nature, to the attainment of happiness thereby, taken from his own experience. Where observe,

First, His study of the creatures; and that set forth,

1. By the opportunity he had thereto; he was then king over Israel in Jerusalem, ver. 12.

It was not when he was a child, but when a king, and endued with extraordinary wisdom; yea, a king of a wise people, Deut. iv. 6; and in Jerusalem, the oracle of wisdom.

2. By the diligence he used therein; seen,

(1.) In the subject he employed in the study, his heart; *I gave my heart to it.*

(2.) In the act, seeking, *searching.*

(3.) In the instrument or guide he used, *by wisdom.*

(4.) In the object he was conversant about in those studies; I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom *concerning all things that are done under heaven*, to wit, all the works of God in nature.

3. By the calling he had thereto, ver. 13.

Secondly, His verdict or sentence of all upon his study and search, 'All is vanity,' ver. 14.

Thirdly, The reason of such his sentence; the insufficiency of such knowledge to straighten things crooked, or to supply defects.

*Doct. 1.* To study the nature and course and use of all God's works, is a duty imposed by God upon all sorts of men, from the king that sitteth upon the throne to the artificer.

This sore travail hath God given to the sons of men, even to kings also, ver. 12, 13; Prov. xxv. 2.

*Reason 1.* God's glory, which is seen in the creatures, Ps. xix. 1, and cxlv. 10; Rom. i. 20. It is a disgrace to a good workman not to look at his work, but to slight it.

*Reason 2.* Our own benefit; both of body for health, as in the knowledge of many medicinal things; and of soul for instruction, which may be learned from the creatures; and of the estate for gain, when we know the worth and use of each thing.

*Use 1.* To reprove the strait-heartedness of most, who study no further the creatures than for necessity or pastime. The gentleman only observeth so much of the nature of dogs, and hawks, and pheasants, and partridges, &c., as serveth for his game. The tradesman looketh only at the nature and use of such things, as whereby he getteth his living, whether sheep, beasts, skins, wool, spices, fishes, fowl, &c.

But studying the nature of all things, which, by observation and conference, men might learn one of another, would enlarge our hearts to God, and our skill to usefulness to ourselves and others.

Rich men have more means, and poor men more vacancy, to seek and get this knowledge; how justly, then, are both reprov'd for wanting heart to it! Prov. xvii. 16. Yea, scholars here are not to be excused who study only some general causes and properties of the creatures, as the principles of natural bodies, their motion, time, place, measure,

&c., but neglect to apply their studies to the nature and use of all things under heaven.

*Doct. 2.* Those businesses which God setteth us about, we are to set our hearts and best endeavours upon them. God laid this sore travail upon men; and Solomon gave his heart to seek and search, &c.

*Reason 1.* God's wholly we are, and therefore to employ our whole selves at his appointment.

*Reason 2.* His blessing is upon the industrious, his curse upon the negligent, Prov. x. 4; Jer. xlvi. 10.

*Reason 3.* All the opportunity we have of taking pains to any profitable use, is in this life, Ecces. ix. 10. Time spendeth fast, and should be redeemed, Eph. v. 15, 16.

*Use.* To reprove slackness and idleness in any calling, whether the study of nature or other. It is not for men to say they have nothing to do, or to stand idle, because no man hath hired them, Mat. xx. 6, 7. Behold a world of creatures for thee to study upon. If God lay a sore travail upon the sons of men, it is not for kings to neglect it, but even they to give their hearts this way.

*Doct. 3.* Such as speak by experience, speak with authority, as Solomon here, ver. 14; Acts iv. 20.

Three things give authority to speech:—

1. Experience.
2. A good calling from God, Amos vii. 10–17.
3. The Spirit of God, and we speaking in the evidence of it, 1 Cor. ii. 4; Acts viii. 13; Mat. vii. 29.

*Use 1.* To teach young men who want experience to be the more modest in speech, Job xxxii. 6, 7.

*Use 2.* To teach ministers especially to know by experience the power of the gospel and grace of God in themselves, and then teach it to others.

*Doct. 4.* They that have best experience of the knowledge of the creature, find both the creatures and the knowledge of them vain and unprofitable to the attainment of happiness, yea, tending rather to the vexation of the spirit, ver. 14.

For the philosophers, by the wisdom gathered from the creatures, knew not God in the wisdom of God—that is, in Christ, in whom alone our happiness is, 1 Cor. i. 20, 21.

Unprofitable to happiness, but rather yielding vexation.

1. Because they lead us not to happiness.

2. There lieth a curse upon the creature ever since the fall, Gen. iii. 17; Rom. viii. 20.

3. Because of the difficulty of the searching out of many secrets in nature, as the cause of the sea's flowing, the motion of the moon, the loadstone's drawing of iron, and looking towards the north pole, sundry sympathies and antipathies of the creatures. It is said by some to be the death of Aristotle, that he could not comprehend the cause of Euripus seven times ebbing and flowing in a day: Because I cannot comprehend thee, saith he, thou shalt comprehend me; and so is said to have thrown himself into it.

4. Because the study of nature healeth not the sinful defects of nature in our own spirits, which is the reason Solomon rendereth, ver. 15.

*Use 1.* To teach scholars and other students of nature so to study it, as not to place felicity in the creatures, or in the knowledge of them; they are vain and vexing if used to that end. Solomon doth not bring a causeless evil report upon the world, as the spies did upon Canaan.

*Obj.* But do not many scholars acknowledge they find great contentment, yea, sweetness in the study and knowledge of the creatures?

*Ans. 1.* True, they may, if they use the creatures and the knowledge of them not to find happiness in them, but to those other ends for which God made them, mentioned in Doct. 1, p. 15.

2. Though many think themselves happy by such speculations, it is because they cast not up their accounts, as Solomon here doth, to see what true reformation of their own perverseness, or supply of their defects, they have found thereby.

*Use 2.* To teach all men neither to satisfy themselves in such things as reach not to the healing the crookedness of their natures, nor to the supplying of the defects thereof. How vain, then, are they that see not the vanity of wealth, honour, pleasure, all earthly things, which are all of them short herein!

*Doct. 5.* The crooked perverseness and sinful defects of our nature are not healed by the knowledge of God's works in nature.

A threefold crookedness is in our nature.

1. We act not from a right principle, from God in Christ, but from ourselves.

2. We act not by a right rule, God's will and word.

3. For a right end, God's honour, but our own ends.

Defects also innumerable: first, In gifts; secondly, In acts, as in thoughts, words, and works.

Hence the philosophers themselves, as vicious as others in pride and vainglory, in wantonness, in covetousness, in flattery, &c.

Yea, they are more averse and backward to embrace the gospel than the common sort, Acts xvii. 18, 32.

1. Natural bodies cannot reach to the healing of our souls.

2. The virtue of the creatures is finite, as themselves be; but it requireth an infinite power, even a new creation, to heal our crookedness, and to supply our defects, Ps. li. 10.

*Use 1.* To shew us the depth of our corruption; no creature is able to make our crooked spirits straight, or to supply our defects, which are innumerable.

*Use 2.* To stir us up to the knowledge of Christ, whom to know is eternal life, John xvii. 3. He rectifies our crookedness, and supplies all our defects, John i. 16.

Ver. 16. *I communed with my own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.*

Ver. 17. *And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.*

Ver. 18. *For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.*

Solomon having taught us, partly by the nature of the creatures themselves, and partly by his own experience, that happiness is not to be found in the creatures,

He now proceedeth to inquire after happiness, in making trial and use of those blessings which God hath given him:

1. Great estate; 2. Great wisdom.

Which point he delivereth by declaring,

First, His communing with himself, what gifts he

had received, which were two: 1. Great wisdom; 2. Great estate;

Amplified, 1. *a minore*, 'Greater than any before him in Jerusalem.'

2. By the confirmation of it by his experience, ver. 16.

Secondly, His making use of the benefit of both these gifts, and that by a phrase frequent in Scripture, 'I gave my heart to know wisdom,' to wit, to know the worth of it by experience and search.

'And to know madness and folly,' to wit, by experience; thus making use of his great estate to know the worth and benefit of sensual blessings, mentioned chap. ii. ver. 1-10, which to do, in way of seeking happiness therein, he calleth madness and folly, ver. 17, and chap. ii. 3.

Thirdly, His observation of the worth of wisdom; ver. 17, 'I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.'

Fourthly, His reason of such his judgment upon observation taken, from the sorrow accompanying and following wisdom, ver. 18.

*Doct.* 1. Solomon, in his time, attained to great excellency, both of outward estate and inward wisdom.

His estate was great,

1. In wise princes and counsellors, 1 Kings iv. 1-6, and ii. 6.

2. In provision for his household, 1 Kings iv. 7-19.

3. In multitude and peace of his subjects, and in largeness of dominion, 1 Kings iv. 20, 21, 24, 25.

4. In beautiful<sup>1</sup> keeping, 1 Kings iv. 22, 23; compare this with that of Neh. v. 18.

5. In horses and chariots, 1 Kings iv. 26, and x. 26.

6. In magnificent buildings, 1 Kings vi., vii. 1, 2, &c., and ix. 17-19.

7. In abundance of wealth, 1 Kings x. 14-21; which he got,

(1.) By sea voyages, 1 Kings ix. 26-28.

(2.) By merchandise in Egypt, 1 Kings x. 28, 29.

(3.) By presents, 1 Kings x. 25.

(4.) By husbandry; for those officers that served his household every month were overseers of his herd and flocks and vineyards. This care he adviseth his son, Prov. xxvii. 23-27.

His wisdom was great.

<sup>1</sup> Query, 'bountiful' ?—ED.

First, By the means of it.

1. From his youth up, by God's blessing in nature, 1 Kings ii. 9.

2. Prayer, choosing it above all blessings, 1 Kings iii. 9-12.

3. Experience, Eccles. i. 16.

Secondly, In the effects of it, 1 Kings iv. 32, 33.

Thirdly, In comparison of all others, 1 Kings iv. 29-31.

Fourthly, In the fame of it, and the use made of it, 1 Kings iv. 34, and x. 1-17.

Reasons of these so great blessings given him of God :

1. The upright-heartedness of his father, 1 Sam. xiii. 14.

2. Because he was to be a type of Christ, who aboundeth in all riches and treasures of wisdom and blessedness, that of his fulness we might all receive supply of all our wants, John i. 16.

*Use* 1. To teach us the right and ready way to attain wealth and wisdom, and to procure it to our children ; which are,

1. Upright-heartedness ; giving up our wills to be guided by God's will ; for that is a heart after God's heart.

2. Prayer for wisdom, above wealth or any other outward blessing, 1 Kings iii. 11-13.

3. Just and honest dealing, without bribery or partiality. Solomon's throne was established by justice ; he never wronged any.

4. A wise care reaching to the outmost corner of all our affairs.

5. Bountiful dispensing the talents we receive to the public good of others.

*Use* 2. To teach us not to rest in inward gifts or outward blessings, to preserve us from falling, but in humbleness of heart to depend upon Christ. Solomon with all these blessings fell fearfully.

*Doct.* 2. It is the part of a wise Christian to consider within himself what inward and outward blessings he hath received.

Solomon communed with his own heart : Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom, &c., Ps. cxxvi. 3.

*Reason* 1. How shall we else be thankful to the Lord for the blessings we enjoy ?

*Reason* 2. How shall we else employ the talents we have received to God's best advantage ?

*Use.* To teach all men, especially great men, to follow Solomon's example herein. A steward that never setteth down his accounts, what he hath received of his lord's moneys, will never make a good account of the expense of it.

We must not be so brutish as the swine or other beasts, that eat what is given them, but never commune with their hearts what they have received.

Ver. 17. *And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly : I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.*

Ver. 18. *For in much wisdom is much grief : and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.*

*Doct.* 1. To give a man's heart to knowledge is the way to obtain.

'I gave my heart to know,' &c., and 'I perceived,' &c.

*Reason* 1. From the heart's dominion or commanding power over the whole man. It setteth the senses a-work, to look about and listen ; the mind to understand ; the judgment to consider and observe ; the memory to keep up whatsoever might make for the gaining of knowledge.

*Reason* 2. The heart set upon a thing will also deal with God about it, and neglect no other means.

*Use* 1. To teach students to give their hearts to knowledge ; which is done—1. By esteeming it a singular thing ; 2. By cleaving to it with earnest affection.

*Use* 2. To stir us up to seek the knowledge of that wisdom much more, the beginning whereof is the fear of the Lord. For if Solomon gave his heart here to the knowledge of that wisdom which is gotten by the knowledge of the creatures and human affairs, how much more should we give our hearts to the knowledge of the Creator and our Redeemer, whom to know is eternal life, John xvii. 3. Giving our hearts to this, we shall obtain even this also, Prov. xxiii. 26, and ii. 2-5.

*Doct.* 2. It is a wise man's part seriously to observe and consider what good he getteth by his own wisdom : ver. 17, 'To know wisdom,'—he meaneth, to know it experimentally, to know the worth and benefit of it.

*Reason 1.* It is the part of wisdom to observe the goodness of everything—as knowledge observeth truth—and therefore it should not be wanting to observe the goodness of itself. The eye can see each thing but itself; but it is the glory of wisdom (the eye of the soul) to see itself with reflecting upon itself.

*Reason 2.* Else we shall take this talent in vain, if we do not consider what it is good for; otherwise we shall either undervalue it, or overvalue it.

*Use.* To reprove a common fault in scholars, who seek to gather more and more knowledge, but never consider what to do with it, or what use to put it to, or what themselves are the better for it. All things but the last end, are no further good than as they lead to him; he only is good in himself and for himself. We need not consider what further good we get by him; to get him is abundantly good enough. To look at anything as good in itself, without looking further what it is good for, is to put it in the place of God, which is flat atheism.

*Doct. 3.* To give ourselves to make use of our great estate according to the nature of it, will give us to know by experience madness and folly.

Solomon had observed (in ver. 16) that God had given him a great estate and great wisdom. In this 17th verse he giveth his heart to know the use and benefit and worth of both; of wisdom first, and then of his great estate. Now instead of knowing the use and benefit of his great estate, he putteth it to know madness and folly; as if the giving of his heart to make use of it, were to lay hold on madness and folly. Thus he interpreteth himself, chap. ii. 1–11.

*Reason.* To make use of our great estate, according to the nature of it, is to use it to erect great buildings; to plant vineyards, orchards, gardens; to provide a man's self of store of servants, costly apparel, rich furniture, gold and silver, musical instruments, as is shewn ver. 3–10 of chap. ii.

Now the benefit he had by the use of his great estate was madness and folly.

Madness is a privation of natural reason and natural affection.

Madness, in the original, implieth two things.

1. A fond delight in rejoicing and exalting a man's self; self-applauding.

2. A vainglorious boasting to others, even some-

time with loud clamours and cracking; celebrating a man's self, and affecting to be celebrated of others.

Both these are found to arise in a man's spirit, upon his fair buildings, sumptuous provision, and furniture, and attendance, goodly and pleasant gardens, orchards, &c., Dan. iv. 30.

Folly is a dulness, and fondness or weakness (*Stupor senus in judicando*, Aquin. ii. 2, Q. 46, Art. 2) the dulness of the understanding to judge and discern of things. So is it with every man employing his great estate in these rich and glorious matters; he shall find discerning and savouring of heavenly things much dulled.

*Use 1.* To call upon men of great estates to consider what good they get by their great estates, and their employment of them. If they employ them about great buildings, rich furniture, &c., as Solomon did, chap. ii. 3–8, then consider if madness and folly be not their portion.

*Use 2.* If men's callings require the employment of their estates in sundry of these things, then it behoveth them especially to watch over themselves, lest madness and folly grow upon them.

*Use 3.* To exhort men of great estates to employ them not so much according to nature, which breedeth in the owners madness and folly. as in liberality to the poor, hospitality to strangers, maintenance of church and commonwealth, &c. So may we wisely lay up a good foundation for time to come, Luke xvi. 9; 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19.

*Doct. 4.* Much wisdom bringeth with it much grief, sorrow, and vexation of spirit; and the more wisdom, the more grief.

The wisdom he here speaketh of, is an acquire wisdom—to wit, natural or civil wisdom, gotten from the observation of the creatures, or of human affairs.

*Reason 1.* From the means used for the getting of this wisdom, reading and meditation, which are weariness to the flesh, Eccles. xii. 12. Study heateth the brain, intendeth and stretcheth the mind, as if the body were stretched on the rack; yea, sometimes to the breaking of a man's wits. As in wrestling there is striving, then weariness, then despair of overcoming, then giving over. then taking it up again; so in study, again and again.

*Reason 2.* The curse of God upon the body of the

creatures causeth that no use can be made of them, but with some sweat to the body, some grief and vexation to the spirit.

*Reason 3.* Envy and emulation in others, which breedeth a learned man disturbance, indignation, and vexation, and discontentment; in ourselves, that we are so much neglected, nor better respected than others of less eminency, as we conceive.

*Reason 4.* The more knowledge we attain, the more we see our own ignorance, which addeth much grief.

*Reason 5.* Much study drieth up the sweetest moisture in the body, whether blood or marrow; consumeth the cheerful spirits, and so breedeth morosity and harshness, which is a vexation to a man's self and others.<sup>1</sup>

*Reason 6.* The vanity of this wisdom falling short of Christ and his grace, which is true wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 21.

*Use 1.* To reprove a foolish conceit of ignorant people, that think ministers and scholars eat the bread of idleness, come easily by their living, &c. No calling more wasteth and grieveth him that is occupied therein than theirs doth. The ploughman's employment is a pastime to theirs; his labour strengtheneth his body, but theirs wasteth body and spirit; whence it is the one so long a time outliveth the other.

*Use 2.* To teach men to bear the more with scholars and wise men's weakness and morosity, they are incident to their callings.

*Use 3.* To teach wise men to see if this be not the fruit of their wisdom. If yea, then to seek after that wisdom which maketh blessed, and addeth no sorrow with it, Prov. iii. 17.

## CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1. *I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy thy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.*

Ver. 2. *I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doth it?*

From verse sixteen of the former chapter, Solomon hath tried what happiness might be found in his great

<sup>1</sup> Calvin desired the senate of Geneva to pardon his morosity.

wisdom; now he proceedeth to try what happiness might be found in his great estate, in the pleasures and profits which it yieldeth.

Parts, 5:

1. Solomon encourageth himself, in this soliloquy, to enjoy pleasure, ver. 1, since he cannot find happiness in wisdom: 'Go to now, I will prove thee,' &c.

2. He delivereth his judgment of it, ver. 1, 2; it is vanity, madness, good for nothing. What doth it?

3. He hath declared by particular induction the special delights he gave himself to take pleasure in.

(1.) In his diet, wine, ver. 3.

(2.) In his buildings, ver. 4.

(3.) In husbandry.

[1.] Planting of vineyards, and making gardens, orchards, pools of water, ver. 6.

[2.] Storing of cattle, ver. 7.

(4.) Housekeeping.

[1.] Retinue, ver. 7.

[2.] Wealth, ver. 8.

(5.) Music, ver. 8.

4. He amplifieth his enjoying of these,

(1.) By his joint laying hold of (diverse) wisdom, ver. 3.

(2.) By the end he aimed at, in all his pleasure, ver. 3.

(3.) *A minori*, he increased in these above all others, ver. 9.

(4.) By adding all other things like these, ver. 10.

(5.) By his solacing himself in them all, as being his portion, ver. 10.

5. He relateth the issue hereof or event, which was that upon survey he found out all to be vanity, vexation, unprofitableness, ver. 11.

*Doct.* 1. Conference with ourselves in way of encouragement addeth strength and freedom to our resolutions and purposes, Luke xii. 19; Ps. xliii. 5.

*Reason 1.* Words are as bellows, to blow up fervency and strength of spirit, as well in ourselves as in others.

*Reason 2.* They presuppose a judgment satisfied in the lawfulness and expediency of that we go about, out of the abundance whereof the mouth speaketh words of encouragement.

*Use 1.* To teach us to use this help to stir up our dull hearts, and to strengthen our feeble knees to any any good duty, Ps. xxvii. 6, 7, &c.



*Use 2.* To teach us to use the like conference with ourselves in way of discouragement from sins. The same breath that bloweth up fire cooleth hot water, Jer. viii. 6; Gen. xxxix. 9; Neh. vi. 11; Ps. iv. 4.

*Doct. 2.* To give up ourselves to pleasure and laughter, to find happiness therein, is vanity, madness, unprofitableness.

*Reason 1.* There is emptiness in such mirth. In the midst of it the heart is sad; the end of it is heaviness, Prov. xiv. 13; Isa. l. 11; Eccles. vii. 6.

*Reason 2.* To frolic it in the midst of so many sins and dangers is not the part of a wise man, but of a madman rather, Dan. v. 7; James iv. 9.

*Use 1.* To reprove the vanity and madness of epicurean gallants, voluptuous livers.

*Use 2.* To exhort us to believe Solomon's experience, who hath proved it to our hands, and not to place and seek happiness in mirth and jollity, Ps. iv. 6, 7.

*Ver. 3.* *I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.*

*Ver. 4.* *I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:*

*Ver. 5.* *I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:*

*Ver. 6.* *I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:*

*Ver. 7.* *I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:*

*Ver. 8.* *I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.*

*Ver. 9.* *So was I great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.*

*Ver. 10.* *And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.*

*Ver. 11.* *Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.*

*Doct. 1.* To give up a man's self to seek his chief joys and happiness in outward comforts and delights, is to take hold of folly.

Solomon, here seeking to give himself to wine, and great buildings and plantings, and gathering of wealth and cattle, as also to great retinue and music, to see what was the chief good thing of the sons of men, saith here of himself, he laid hold on folly, ver. 3.

*Reason.* These outward delights deeply tasted of do dull and stupefy our minds to the discerning and relishing heavenly and spiritual comforts. And what is folly else but *stupor sensus in judicando?* Prov. xx. 1, and xxvii. 7; Hos. iv. 11; Gen. xxvii. 4. Isaac's affecting venison perverted his mind and will to divert the blessings of God and his own love from his better son to profane Esau.

Feeding of sweetmeats does take away the taste of our drink; so do these outward delights fed upon infatuate the soul to the disrelishing of the water of life.

*Use 1.* To shew us how much more folly it is to give a man's self to seek pleasure in unlawful delights, as in drunkenness, whoredom, cards, dice, interludes, &c.

If all lawful fruits tasted on do not satisfy, how much less will it satisfy us, or bless us, to taste of the forbidden fruit?

*Use 2.* To wean us from placing our chiefest contentment even in these lawful profits and pleasures. It is but folly to set our hearts upon transitory, sensual blessings, which are but trifles in comparison of spiritual and eternal blessings.

*Use 3.* To stir us up to lay hold of eternal life; the favour of God; the pardon of sin; the grace of God's Spirit; the ways of obedience to God's commandments. This is as true wisdom as the contrary is folly.

*Use 4.* To watch over our spirits, lest they grow unsavoury, the more we enjoy outward sensual contentments and delights.

*Doct. 2.* Wisdom may be held with the large seeking after delight in these outward things, but with much hazard.

Solomon in the end almost lost himself in these sensual delights.

*Reason 1.* *Qui vadit per precipitium, vergit in ruinam.* He that walketh in the uttermost extent of the borders of his Christian liberty will soon degenerate, and fall into some licentiousness.

*Reason 2.* The body, pampered with all contentments, kicketh against the spirit, Deut. xxxii. 15; 1 Cor. ix. 27.

*Use 1.* To discourage us from making like trial, as Solomon here did, whether man's chief good might be found in outward pleasures and profits. His wisdom was much hazarded in so doing—yea, blemished and eclipsed. How much less shall our less wisdom hold out in such trials.

Better is it for us to trust and believe Solomon's experience, than to try to our cost and danger as he did.

Solomon himself led himself into temptation by this course. If we will not be warned by his fall, our danger will be the more desperate.

*Doct. 3.* God alloweth us to rejoice in these outward things, (pleasures or profits,) though not to seek or place our happiness in them.

*Reason 1.* It is the portion which God giveth a man of all his labour, ver. 1, 10, 24, 26.

*Reason 2.* It is a just ground, and good help and means, to stir up ourselves to the cheerful and thankful service of God, Deut. xxviii. 47.

*Reason 3.* It doth good like a medicine, healing some bodily infirmities, and strengthening to each good duty, and to freedom in it, Prov. xvii. 22; Neh. viii. 10.

*Reason 4.* *Hilaritas in Domino est indicium animi bene sibi conscii:* Godly cheerfulness is a token of a good conscience, Prov. xv. 15.

*Use 1.* To teach us not to defraud ourselves of such lawful delights as the Lord alloweth us, in the good things we enjoy; we shall do him and ourselves also injury in so doing.

*Doct. 4.* He that shall take a just account and survey of all the happiness he getteth by his worldly profits and pleasures, shall find for his felicity, vanity; for tranquillity of mind, vexation of spirit; for advantage, no profit.

*Reason 1.* Of vanity.

1. God never sowed man's happiness in those

outward things; how, then, shall we there reap it?

2. God's curse hath brought vanity upon the whole creature, and all the fruits of it, by reason of our sin, Rom. viii. 20.

*Reason 2.* Of vexation of spirit.

1. The delusion of our hopes, which we promised to ourselves by these outward things, must needs vex us.

2. The distempering of our bodies, but especially of our spirits, by these sensual delights, must needs grieve a good spirit.

*Reason 3.* Of no profit.

1. For in them we save not our souls, but rather lose them, Mat. vi. 26.

*Use 1.* To teach men destitute of these things not to think themselves miserable for want of them; for they that have them are not thereby happy.

*Use 2.* To teach men that enjoy these things not to presume of more good to be found in them than there is in them. No happiness can be in them; seek that in better things. He that looketh not for much from the creature shall never be much deceived.

If happiness could be found in outward worldly things, how could God be happy without the world, and before the world was made?

Ver. 12. *And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.*

Ver. 13. *Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.*

Ver. 14. *The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.*

Ver. 15. *Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.*

Ver. 16. *For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever, seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten: and how dieth the wise man? as the fool.*

Ver. 17. *Therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit*

Solomon, having considered the vanity of wisdom and folly severally and apart, now cometh to consider of them jointly, in comparison one with another, whereof he rendereth the reason, ver. 12, because no man had better experience of both of them than himself. His singular experience, though out of one man, may stand for a general observation, as if it had been proved by the experience of all men. He that should try these things after him should find no more in them than he had done.

Now, upon comparing of them together, he first preferreth wisdom above folly by a comparison,

1. Of light excelling darkness, ver. 13.
2. Of sight excelling blindness; or of him whose eyes are in his head above him who walketh in darkness, ver. 14.

Secondly, He equalleth wisdom and folly by the events happening to the fool and wise alike; whence he falleth,

1. Into an expostulation with himself, why he should then be more wise.
2. Into a resolution or acknowledgment of this vanity, befalling wisdom and wise men, which is to find the like event befalling themselves as fools, ver. 5.

3. He expresseth in particular what these events are which fall equally upon both; to wit,

1. Both to be forgotten alike.
2. Both to die alike, ver. 16.

The effect of which in himself he sheweth to be frustrated of his life, arising from the sense of the grievousness of this passage of God's work, together with the vanity and vexation of spirit which each thing yieldeth to him, ver. 17.

*Doct.* 1. He that will judge wisely and fully of things must consider of them, not only in themselves apart, but jointly also, in comparison one with another.

Thus wise Solomon, to give the more right sentence of wisdom and folly, doth not only consider them in their own worth and use apart, (which, in case of placing happiness in either of them, he findeth to be vanity,) but also he turneth his heart to consider them jointly, in comparison one with another.

*Reason* 1. It is the nature of a comparison to yield much illustration and light to the things com-

pared, which much helpeth the judgment to discern of both of them aright.

*Reason* 2. In comparing our good things with our betters, it helpeth to abate our pride.

*Reason* 3. In comparing the evils lying upon us with the greater evils lying upon others, it helpeth our contentment.

*Use* 1. To teach us to do the like in all such things whereof we would take a just estimate; as in conceiving aright of our wisdom, wealth, poverty, liberty, restraint, credit, discredit, husbands, wives, children, friends, neighbours, &c.; comparing them with the estates of others worse than our own, it will make us the better contented with our own portion; comparing them with the estates of others better than our own, will abate our pride.

*Doct.* 2. It is for men of Solomon's worth to make Solomon's comparisons.

He knew, by God's own voice to him, that none should succeed him in wisdom and wealth, 1 Kings iii. 12, 13; and therefore he might safely compare his own singular experience of the worth of wisdom and wealth, honour and pleasure, with the experience of all that should come after him.

*Reason* 1. Unless a man do know his own eminency above all others' in the things whereof he maketh comparisons, he will appear no better than vain-glorious, if not ridiculous. Campian challenging both the universities, though his cause had been as good as he presumed it to be, yet coming short of sundry learned men in the knowledge of the Greek tongue, exposed himself to just disgrace.

Goliath defying the whole host of Israel, and yet not knowing the eminency of the strength of faith above that of spear and shield, made himself a scorn and a prey.

*Use* 1. To reprove the insolency of boasting spirits, comparing and challenging many times their equals, if not betters, to their own shame in the end. Peter preferring himself before all men, fell worse than any of his fellows; Solomon excelling all, yet maketh comparisons but of equals here, ver. 12, 25.

*Doct.* 3. It is not for any to hope to find more benefit by the use of wisdom, wealth, honour, pleasure, than Solomon did, ver. 12.

By folly, Solomon means the enjoying of all sensual

comforts, (whereof he spake, ver. 1-11,) such as wealth, honour, pleasure.

*Reason, a majore.* If he excelled all others in all these things, so far as any of them might be employed to any comfortable, or profitable, or honourable use, it is not for his inferiors in all or any of these, to find more good by them than he had done.

*Use 1.* To teach all men to content themselves with Solomon's experience, and not to look for more benefit in these things than he found. If he, seeking the chief good in them, found them all vanity and bitterness, we, in following his example, shall find no better success.

But the world will not herein believe Solomon, though he should arise from the dead, and report no less to them.

*Doct. 4.* There is as much difference in wisdom above wealth, and such other sensual delights, as is in light above darkness, or in sight above blindness, ver. 13, 14.

Light excelleth darkness in sundry points.

Light is comfortable, stirring up to cheerfulness and boldness, Eccles. xi. 7; but darkness breedeth sadness and timorousness.

So wisdom maketh the face of a man to shine, Eccles. viii. 1; but sensual delights leave a man sad and timorous.

1. Light manifesteth things as they be, Eph. v. 13; darkness hideth them.

2. Light distinguisheth one thing from another; darkness confoundeth all alike.

So wisdom discovereth clearly to us the true discernment of things; but voluptuousness overwhelmeth men with stupidity.

3. Light directeth a man in his way; but darkness misleadeth. So is it with wisdom,—it sheweth a man his way; voluptuousness leadeth aside.

4. Light awakeneth us; but darkness lulleth asleep.

So doth wisdom stir up a man to his business; but voluptuousness lulleth a man asleep in laziness and security.

Sight excelleth blindness, as in all the things wherein light excelleth darkness, (for the light of the body is the eye;) so in these things. Besides,

1. Sight is an ornament to the body; blindness a

deformity. By it the body is, as it were, a living dungeon to the soul, without windows.

So is wisdom an ornament to the soul; but the voluptuous person burieth himself quick in obscurity and deformity, 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

2. Sight can discern light if it be shewed to a man; but blindness maketh a man incapable of seeing light offered.

So wisdom apprehendeth counsel and instruction; but the voluptuous person is incapable of either, Hosea iv. 11.

By the voluptuous person, I mean a man seeking happiness in sensual pleasure, whether arising from profit, honour, ease, or pastime, &c.

So Solomon himself understandeth himself, for he saith to himself, I will try thee with pleasure, chap. ii. 1; he thereupon sheweth what trial he took of pleasure in great and honourable works, profitable treasures, musical pastimes, &c.

*Use 1.* To teach us that men do not straightway condemn all such things, wherein yet they do not place happiness. Solomon will not admit happiness to be found in wisdom, (he meaneth natural or civil wisdom,) and yet he acknowledgeth much excellency, and worth, and use of it.

*Use 2.* To stir up men to be studious of getting wisdom above wealth, profit, pleasure.

*Use 3.* To teach wise men and learned more contentment in knowledge, than other men take in wealth.

*Doct. 5.* The same events, to die, and to be forgotten after death, befall both to the wise man and to the voluptuous epicure alike, Eccles. ix. 15.

*Reason 1.* The curse of God upon mankind is more powerful to kill and blast men, than wisdom, much less sensuality, can be to preserve their lives and memories.

*Use 1.* To stir up both wise men and voluptuous to prepare for death, and another life after this. Neither wealth nor wisdom can secure from death.

*Doct. 6.* Such as employ themselves in getting wisdom and wealth, and other sensual comforts, to the intent to find happiness therein, shall in the end be weary of their wisdom and wealth, yea, even of their lives. Solomon here having so employed his life, in the end cometh to this, Why am I more wise? ver. 15. And therefore I hated life, ver. 17.

*Reason 1.* These things' not yielding happiness, sheweth us their vanity, and our vanity in seeking it in them.

Again, hope disappointed vexeth the spirit, Prov. xiii. 12, (*a minori*.)

*Reason 2.* God inflicteth a more special curse upon earthly blessings, when they are set up as *summum bonum* in his stead. God never more powerfully and disdainfully overthroweth Dagon, than when he is exalted with the spoils of his ark, 1 Sam. v. 2-4. So doth God then especially blast worldly comforts, when our heart is carried captive unto them.

*Quest.* But whether did Solomon well to be weary of his life for this cause?

*Ans.* No; he should rather have been weary of his sin in seeking happiness in these things.

Life we are not to hate, but for Christ, Luke xiv. 26.

*Uſe 1.* To wean men from placing their happiness, as the world generally doth, in these outward blessings. Certainly as it was with Solomon, so shall it be with all such. They shall in the end be weary of all these things, and of themselves also.

Ver. 18. *Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun; because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.*

Ver. 19. *And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.*

Ver. 20. *Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.*

Ver. 21. *For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for a portion. This also is vanity, and a great evil.*

Ver. 22. *For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?*

Ver. 23. *For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.*

Solomon, in ver. 17, told us one effect which the consideration of the like event in death to the wise and fool wrought in him, which was his hatred of life.

In this verse he addeth another effect of the same consideration, which was his hatred also of all his labour, ver. 18; which he further amplifieth, first by two causes thereof, which shew the like event befalling to the wise man in death as to the fool. Where

The first is, That he shall leave behind him all his labour, to wit, the great works he hath laboured in, to another that shall come after him, ver. 18.

The second is, His uncertainty of his son's disposition, whether he will prove a wise man or a fool, ver. 19.

Secondly, By the effect of the hatred of his labour: ver. 20, 'Therefore,' saith he, 'I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour,' &c.; which effect he further amplifieth by a double cause.

1. For that he having laboured in wisdom and knowledge and equity must leave the estate he hath so gotten to a man that hath taken no pains for wisdom, or knowledge, or equity, ver. 21.

2. For that his labour hath yielded to himself nothing but sorrows, grief, restlessness, even in the night, ver. 22, 23.

*Doct. 1.* When we labour for worldly comforts and blessings (such as wisdom, wealth, honour, and pleasure be) to the intent to seek happiness in them, we shall in the end come to see our labour lost, yea, become odious and wearisome to us.

For no man may expect to find more good by his labour after these things than Solomon did, yet this was the issue of all his labour so bestowed.

*Reason.* As of the former hatred of life, ver. 17.

*Quest.* But whether did Solomon well, thus to hate his labour for not yielding him that fruit he expected?

*Ans.* No; for, 1. His labour was commanded of God, and was therefore good, Eccles. i. 13; Gen. iii. 19.

2. His labour had not been in vain if he had used it as God commanded: sundry blessings follow diligent labour, Prov. x. 4, xiv. 23, and xxii. 29.

3. God never gave labour about earthly things that blessing as to yield felicity. It was Solomon's fault to look to reap that fruit from his labour which God never gave it. He should rather have hated the vanity of his own mind, which abused his labour to a wrong end. But Solomon doth well to tell us

plainly how it fell out with him upon his labour so bestowed, that we may also see what we may expect in the like case.

*Use 1.* To teach scholars that labour for natural or civil wisdom, and other men that labour for wealth, or honour, or pleasure, not to expect or seek greater happiness in them than they are able to yield. If we do, we shall find our labour lost, yea, wearisome to us in the end.

These things we may labour for, but not as our chiefest good, but to some further higher end. If these things be the top of our hopes and desires, and the last end of our labour, we shall lose our labour and happiness both.

*Obj.* But do not many scholars that seek for no further happiness than learning and wisdom find good contentment therein, free from such hatred of their labours? And so do not many worldlings find the like in their wealth, &c., and never think their labour lost?

*Ans.* True; but such men never cast up their accounts, as Solomon here did, to see whether they have indeed found true cause of contentment, true happiness indeed, in these things. If they had or did, doubtless they will find no better issue than Solomon had done, ver. 12.

*Doct. 2.* It is a wearisome and odious thing to seek happiness in those things which we must leave behind us; as Solomon was to leave all those great works behind him, which he had wrought by his great wisdom and wealth, together with all the comforts which they afforded him, 1 Tim. vi. 7, 8.

*Reason 1.* From the great need we stand in of happiness when we depart hence; yea, then have we most need of it; if otherwise then we fail of it, we become eternally miserable.

*Use 1.* To shew the excellency of godly men above others; they carry the happiness with them which others leave behind them, Prov. xii. 26. When a worldly wealthy man hath made his will, and left all his estate to such and such, what hath he left himself to carry away with him but the anguish and misery of a guilty conscience, and the expectation of worse?

*Use 2.* To exhort therefore to labour more for godliness than all earthly blessings. It is, indeed, great gain which will go current in this world and

that which is to come, 1 Tim. vi. 6, and iv. 8. It is a great gain that bringeth God's blessing and no sorrow with it, Prov. x. 22.

*Doct. 3.* A wise man may have a son grown up to man's estate, and yet be uncertain what he will prove when he cometh to enjoy his father's living.

Solomon old was before he fell into idolatry, 1 Kings xi. 4, and some years he must needs spend in building those temples to his wives' idols, after which time he wrote this book, so that now he was become very old. And therefore Rehoboam could not be young when he wrote it, for he wrote it not long before his death, and at his death Rehoboam was forty-one years old, 1 Kings xiv. 21. And yet Solomon, notwithstanding all his wisdom and deep insight into the nature of all the creatures, and into the manners of men, he was not able to say whether his son would become a wise man or a fool.

*Reason 1.* From the government of wise parents over their children, which keepeth them in from shewing forth their own spirits: *Donec liberius vivendi sit copia adolescentulis, qui vitam seires aut ingenium nosceres; dum aetas, metus, magister prohibebant?*

*Reason 2.* From the change of outward estate, which often changeth inward conditions; *Honores mutant mores.* Sixtus, a humble, crouching cardinal, but none so resolute and stout a pope; a cardinal of the Spanish faction, a pope against Spain.

*Reason 3.* From the various dispositions of some young men especially. Rehoboam himself sometime doth foolishly after his coming to the kingdom, 1 Kings xii. 14; sometimes wisely, 2 Chron. xi. 5, to xii. 13. If he were thus various after he came to the crown, how much more before!

*Use 1.* To teach youth to take notice of their own uncertainty of spirit, that they may more seek to be established with grace.

*Use 2.* To teach parents, as much as may be, to season their children with grace, and to teach them in the trade of the best ways especially; and then are they most likely to foresee their constancy, Prov. xxii. 6.

*Use 3.* To exhort parents to train up their children, above all graces, to humility; for pride is the only sin for which God is wont to strike with madness, Dan. iv. 30-32. That other cause of dis-

raction, to wit, spiritual anguish through brokenness of spirit, Ps. lxxxviii. 15, which Heman fell into, will not blemish reputation of wisdom, 1 Kings iv. 31. God is wont to heal it.

*Doct.* 4. It is a wearisome vanity, tending to make a man to despair of all his labours, a wise man and an honest man to leave his estate, either to an heir of whose wisdom he is uncertain, or to any who hath not laboured after wisdom and honesty, ver. 9-21. This double vexation befell Solomon; first, he was uncertain what his son would prove—wise or foolish.

2. He saw for the present he took pains neither for wisdom, nor equity, or honesty, as himself had done; yea, it may be he also foresaw what loss of his estate might befall his son—ten parts of it to fall to Jeroboam, a man that made Israel to sin. And yet in Libanus, and other parts of Israel, Solomon had built much, 1 Kings ix. 19.

*Reason* 1. For so a wise man is likely to be a prodge to a fool, an honest man to a wretch, a painful man to an idle.

*Use* 1. To wean wise men, and so all men, from voluptuousness, that is, from placing their happiness in earthly comforts. Otherwise it would never have vexed Solomon to have been uncertain of his heir.

For it would have contented him, and ought so to have done,

1. To have enjoyed the comfort of his own labour himself whilst he lived, Ps. cxxviii. 2.

2. To have employed them in his lifetime to the good of others.

3. To have trained up his heir with as much good education as he could.

4. To have disposed his estate at his death as wisely as he could.

5. To leave doubtful events to God, who disposeth all things wisely and justly.

*Use* 2. To moderate men's eager pursuits after wealth. Little know we what manner of men we labour for.

*Use* 3. To reprove our carnal confidence, who think to make sure to leave our estates in a good hand, and there to abide from one time to another—nothing more than Solomon could foresee or provide for.

*Use* 4. To moderate our judgments when we see men's estates fall into the hands of foolish and prodigal heirs; not straight to think they were ill gotten. Solomon had laboured in equity as well as in wisdom, and got all his estate honestly; yet it was scattered (ten parts of it) in his son's days in the hands of a stranger.

*Doct.* 5. To seek felicity in wealth and pleasure, &c., will put a man to continual grief and restlessness day and night, ver. 22, 23; 1 Tim. vi. 10.

Riches and pleasures are as thorns, not only to choke good seed in us, Luke viii. 14, but also to prick and pierce ourselves with many sorrows.

*Reason* 1. Their multitudes are a burden, Eccles. v. 12. As many clothes on a man's bed will put him into a sweat, and not suffer him to sleep; so multitudes and abundance of wealth. For they carry with them many cares, fears, and uncertainties.

*Use* 1. To wean us from seeking such troublesome comforts. Labour we for riches, so as we may have them with God's blessing, which addeth no sorrow, Prov. x. 22.

*Use* 2. To exhort to labour for spiritual treasure, which makes our sleeps sweet, and our days comfortable, Job xxxv. 10; Ps. lxxvii. 6; Prov. xv. 15.

Ver. 18. *Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun; because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.*

Ver. 19. *And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.*

Ver. 20. *Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.*

Ver. 21. *For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil.*

Ver. 22. *For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?*

Ver. 23. *For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.*

When Solomon saw that the exercise of his wis-

dom about the creatures, and his employment of all the creatures unto delight, which he calleth madness and folly, did neither of them satisfy his heart, but both of them alike yield him vanity and vexation of spirit; it gave him occasion to consider whether they were not both of them in comparison equal, or what excellency there was in the one above the other. And this he could as well as any undertake, because he excelled all men in wisdom, 1 Kings iv. 30, and iii. 12.

*Doct.* 1. A wise man that shall compare together wisdom and folly—that is, the exercise of wisdom about the knowledge of the creatures, and the employment of a great estate to try what chief good there may be found in creature comforts—shall find as much excellency in wisdom above folly, as in light above darkness, in sight above blindness, ver. 13, 14.

See this opened and applied in the notes on pp. 25, 26.

*Doct.* 2. Though the excellency of wisdom above folly be as great as the excellency of light above darkness, and of sight above blindness, yet one event happeneth both to the wise and foolish; which Solomon proveth by instances; both, 1. Die alike; 2. Are forgotten alike, ver. 14–16.

*Reason.* From the condition of the creatures, they are temporal, and serve to support a temporal and mortal life; but when this life is ended, we leave them and they leave us.

*Use* 1. To teach wise men, and fools too, to prepare and provide for another life, and honourable remembrance after it by another course, than either wisdom or wealth.

Faith is the only way—1. To eternal life, John xi. 25, 26; 2. To honour, Heb. xi. 2.

*Doct.* 3. To consider the like event befalling to the wise and to the foolish, it may breed in a wise man that exerciseth all his wisdom and labour about creatures and creature comforts deep discontentment, sadly to be weary both of his wisdom and of his life, and of all his labour, wherein he hath exercised his wisdom under the sun. Ver. 15, 'Why was I then more wise.' Ver. 17, 'Therefore I hated life.' Ver. 18, 'Yea, I hated all my labour.' Ver. 20, 'And I went about to cause my heart to despair of all my labour.'

*Reason* 1. From discerning the equality of the like event to himself as to the foolish,—to wit, 1. To die; 2. To be forgotten; 3. From the necessity of leaving all, ver. 18; 4. From the uncertainty of the wisdom or folly of such to whom he shall leave it, ver. 19, in likelihood to leave all to such as have not laboured in wisdom, knowledge, and equity, as Solomon left all to Rehoboam, who was foolish and weak. 1 Kings xii. 8; 2 Chron. xiii. 7. Jeroboam, who, though industrious, 1 Kings xi. 28, yet laboured not in equity; 5. From the portion which a wise man reapeth of all his labours, to wit, sorrow, grief, restlessness by night, ver. 22.

*Quest.* But was it well done of Solomon thus to be discontented and weary of these good gifts of God—1. His wisdom; 2. His life, as well as of his labour?

*Ans.* No; but Solomon did well thus to confess his own distemper before the church, to let them and us all see what we shall get by employment of our wisdom and great estates to seek happiness in creature comforts.

To exercise our wisdom in the knowledge and study of the creatures. To employ them, or to teach others to employ them, in physic and surgery, it would never have made a man weary of it in that course. And in like sort to employ our great estate in due supportance and refreshment of ourselves, education of our families, maintenance of church and commonwealth, succour of poor widows and fatherless, as Job did, would never have made a man weary of his labour. But to try to seek what happiness might be found in all creature comforts, that is it which is vanity and vexation, and maketh a man weary of wisdom, life, labour, as if man should employ his wisdom (art and skill) in the secrets of nature, and lay out a great estate to find the philosopher's stone, what shall he find at length but cause to be weary of his wisdom, life, and labour so bestowed in vain?

*Reason* 2. From the curse of God upon wisdom, wealth, and labour, bestowed upon an end which God never ordained them unto.

*Use* 1. For a warning to scholars not to bless themselves in all the wisdom they get by the study of the creatures, nor in all the labour they take about that knowledge so as to make it their end to



excel herein; but so to subordinate all to some of God's ends, that he may accept them and their labours, lest otherwise he make them weary of all through discontentment.

*Use 2.* To teach men of estates not to bless themselves in their great estates, nor in all the creature comforts they can get by them; it will at length leave them in deep discontentment.

*Use 3.* To teach us so to use our wisdom and estates, as the employment<sup>1</sup> thereof, the fruit thereof, may not die with us, but may be carried along with us, Rev. xiv. 13. Then it will not grieve us, as it did Solomon, ver. 18, to leave our labours behind us.

*Use 4.* To endeavour faithfully the good education of our children, that whether they prove wise or foolish, we may have comfort in our conscionable care of their good; and we, faithfully endeavouring their good, shall find God ordinarily blessing our endeavours so far to them, as we shall leave all behind us to them with comfort.

Ver. 24. *There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.*

Ver. 25. *For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I?*

Ver. 26. *For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

There is no good in man that he should eat and drink, &c., even this I saw that it was from the hand of God, &c. Solomon having said that man hath no portion out of his labours, but grief for his travail, vers. 22, 23, he here rendereth a reason of it, taken from the continent or efficient cause of goodness, which he saith is,

1. Not man; it is not in his power to reach it or give it.

2. But God; whatsoever good we receive, ver. 24. Whereof he rendereth a double reason: 1. From his own experience, ver. 25; himself was as able and ready to seek good in the creatures as any, and yet he could get no other good out of them, than as it

<sup>1</sup> Query, 'enjoyment;'—Ed.

is said, vers. 22, 23. 2. From God's manner of dispensing these good things of this life, to wit, the wise and joyful use and benefit of them to the good man, the travail about them to heap them up to the sinner, and that also for the good man's use, ver. 26, which argueth, that the finding of good by all our labours and travail is not in man's hand, but God's. Whereupon he addeth this usual *epiphonema*, that this also is vanity and vexation of spirit, ver. 26. There is no good in man, or in the power of man; so I translate the words in the same sense as the same words are translated, chap. iii. 12.

*Doct. 1.* To enjoy any good by our labour, yea, so much as to eat or drink with comfort, is not in man's hand, but it is the gift of God, James iv. 13-15; Eccles. iii. 12, 13.

There is a threefold good which our souls might enjoy by our labours: 1. The having of the creature; 2. The use of it; 3. The benefit of that use.

None of these is in the power of our labours to attain unto: 1. Not the having of the creature itself, Eccles. ix. 11; Lev. xxvi. 19, 20; Deut. viii. 17, 18. 2. Nor the use of it either to ourselves, which may be intercepted, as the use of meat and drink, (1.) By sickness, Ps. cvii. 18; Job xxxiii. 20; (2.) By sadness, Ps. xlii. 3, cii. 9, and lxxx. 5; (3.) By sudden fears and dangers, 1 Sam. xxx. 16, 27; 1 Kings vii. 19, 20; Ps. lxxviii. 30, 31; (4.) By covetousness, Eccles. iv. 8, and vi. 2; (5.) By scruple of conscience, Acts x. 13, 14; or to others. 3. Nor the benefit of the use, which is cheerfulness and joy in it; the refreshing and nourishing which the creature might yield, Hag. i. 6; Acts xiv. 17. The benefit of doing good to others is acceptance; but that is of God too, Rom. xv. 31.

*Reason 1.* Since the fall, the good which God put into the creature, Gen. i. 31, is accursed to us for our sin, so that now labour and sorrow is all our portion from the creature, Gen. xvii. 19. 2. Goodness residing chiefly in God, is to be found in the creature only by participation, and that at his pleasure, Mat. xix. 17. By Adam's fall goodness is devoted to the second Adam; to wit, the goodness of the creature, Heb. ii. 6-8; hence from him it is derived to us.

*Use 1.* To reprove, first, Confidence in ourselves for the getting of this or that good by any means

we can use, James iv. 13-15; secondly, Acknowledging the good we have to come from our own means, Hab. i. 16; Amos vi. 13; thirdly, The abusing of meats and drinks and other creatures to vanity, riot, and mischief, &c. The gifts of God are to be used to his service and praise, Hos. ii. 8, 9.

*Use 2.* To exhort to look up unto God for the finding of good in all the means we use, and to acknowledge him in the attaining of it. The heathens did so to their false gods, how much more we to the true? Dan. v. 4. We thank our host for our good cheer, how much more should we thank God for it? 3. To teach us to look up to God, that we may find good in his ordinances especially; for spiritual and eternal good things are least of all in the power of the creature to give or to receive.

*Doct. 2.* It is not for any man to look to find more benefit by his labours, or by the creatures gotten and used by him, than Solomon did.

*Reason.* No man knew the creatures better than he, nor how to use them to better purpose; neither can any man go about to get benefit by them more wisely or more seriously.

*Use.* To teach us to content ourselves with his experience. If he found no happiness by all his labours about the creature, if he found nothing by the creature but his labour for his travail, no more shall we, if we depend upon our labour, or upon the creature, or seek happiness in either.

*Doct. 3.* God giveth to the godly wisdom, knowledge, and a cheerful use of the fruits of his labour, but to the wicked labour and drudgery for the benefit of the godly, ver. 26. A man good in God's sight is here meant the godly, as opposed here to the sinner, Job xxvii. 13, 16, 17; Prov. xxviii. 8.

*Reason 1.* It is the end of God's predestination that all things befalling the wicked should redound to the glory of God's mercy towards the elect, Rom. ix. 22. 2. The godly, having Christ, have the world as theirs, and all the comforts of it, 1 Cor. iii. 21-23. 3. The godly, using the creatures and their own labours about them, in their right place and kind, reap that benefit from them which any way they can yield, Mat. vi. 33. They in that way find the blessing of God, which exempts from sorrow, Prov. x. 22. But the wicked, taking the creatures for their chief good, fall short of God, and of that good also from

the creatures, and their labours about them, which otherwise they might attain.

*Obj.* But doth it not oft fall out contrary, that the wicked have the world at will, and not so the godly? Job xxi. 7-13; Ps. lxxiii. 3-5, and xvii. 14.

*Ans. 1.* It is so as Solomon speaketh here with many godly—they enjoy a wise and cheerful use of their labours and of the creatures; and, contrariwise, many wicked labour and toil, and that uncomfortably, for the good of the godly. 2. A little the righteous hath is better than great treasures of many wicked, Ps. xxxvii. 16; for (1.) The joy of hypocrites and worldlings is but for a moment, Job xx. 5; Isa. l. 11. (2.) Their prosperity is pernicious to them, Prov. i. 32. (3.) The great estate of wicked men never resteth till it be devolved into the hands of the godly, but is meanwhile tossed as a tennis-ball from one hand to another, from one family to another.

*Use.* To exhort to godliness. The godly are good in God's sight; they have comfort of their labours. The wicked men's labours is also for their benefit and comfort.

*Doct. 4.* The disappointment of a man's labour is a vanity and vexation of spirit, especially to such as seek for happiness in their labours about the creatures, ver. 26.

*Reason.* It is a curse of God, Lev. xxvi. 16.

*Use.* To stir us up the more to godliness. Thereby we shall find good in our labours; or if we be disappointed, that also will work our further drawing near to God, Hosea ii. 6, 7.

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### CHAPTER III.

*Ver. 1.* *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:*

*Ver. 2.* *A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;*

*Ver. 3.* *A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;*

*Ver. 4.* *A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;*

*Ver. 5.* *A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;*

Ver. 6. *A time to get, and a time to lose ; a time to keep, and a time to cast away ;*

Ver. 7. *A time to rend, and a time to sew ; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak ;*

Ver. 8. *A time to love, and a time to hate ; a time of war, and a time of peace.*

Ver. 9. *What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth ?*

To everything there is a limited term, (or period,) and a time to every will (or purpose) under the heaven, &c. Solomon having shewed the vanity of all the creatures towards the attainment of felicity ; and that, first, Partly by their own nature, chap. i. 1-11 ; secondly, Partly by the great experience and trial which himself had taken of them—both in, first, The knowledge and study of them, chap. i. 12-18 ; 2. The employment and improvement of them to sensual delights, chap. ii.—he in this chapter (the former part of it) and these words sheweth the vanity that lieth upon the estate and actions of men, by the vicissitude and variety of them, and that by the determined appointment and limitation of God's purpose and providence.

Parts of the words—first, An assertion that all things under heaven are subject to variety and vicissitude of changes, and that by the determinate appointment and limitation of God, ver. 1-8 ; 2. A collection or inference of the unprofitableness of men's labours in regard thereof. The assertion he first delivereth in a general proposition, ver. 1 ; secondly, He declareth and proveth it by an induction of twenty-eight particulars, ver. 2-8. In the assertion, the word translated *season*, is a set or limited time or a determinate period ; as the word is used for an appointed set time, Ezra x. 14 ; Neh. x. 34. And the meaning is not to shew there is a fit season allowed us of God for all things done under heaven : for, first, That is not true ; if it were, what is that to demonstrate the vanity or unprofitableness of men's labour about the creature, which is here the scope of Solomon ? And when he saith, to every purpose, or, as it is in Hebrew, to every will, he meaneth, by a metonymy, to everything which a man willeth, or purposeth, or performeth. In the induction, the twenty-eight particulars consist of fourteen pair of contraries, wherein a man changeth from one contrary estate

or course unto another : whereof the first pair is natural, to be born to die ; secondly, The rest voluntary, and they are either, first, Private and domestical, as a time, 1. Of planting and pulling up ; 2. Of breaking down and building ; 3. Of weeping and laughing ; 4. Of mourning and dancing ; 5. Of casting away and gathering stones ; 6. Of embracing and refraining ; 7. Of getting and losing ; 8. Of keeping and casting away ; 9. Of rending and sewing ; 10. Of silence and speech ; 11. Of love and hatred. Secondly, Politic, as, 1. Of killing and healing ; 2. Of war and peace.

*Doct. 1.* The times that pass over us bring upon us many changes, yea, often from one contrary to another.

*Doct. 2.* To every change that befalleth us, even to every state and business of men under heaven, there is a time limited and determined by God.

*Doct. 3.* This change of men's estates, and the limitation of the times thereof, leaveth a man no profit by all his labour towards the attainment of happiness. But, for brevity sake, all these may be handled together.

*Doct. 1.* As the main proposition of the text.

*Doct. 2.* As the principal reason of it.

*Doct. 3.* As the chief use of both.

For proof of the first doctrine, Ps. xxx. 5-7 ; Lam. i. 1, 2, and iv. 1, 2, 7, 8 ; Isa. i. 21, 22 ; John xxi. 18. The people sometimes cry Hosanna, sometimes Crucify ; Peter sometimes maketh a glorious confession of Christ, sometimes a gross denial ; Paul sometimes as an angel of God, Gal. iv. 14, sometimes an enemy, Gal. iv. 16. Nebuchadnezzar sometimes flourishing in his palace, sometimes grazing among the beasts, restored again.

*Reason 1.* From the determinate purpose of God to limit men's times and changes, Job xiv. 5, and vii. 1 ; John vii. 30, and viii. 20 ; Luke xiii. 32, 33, and xxii. 53 ; Acts xiii. 25, 26 ; Ps. xxxi. 15 ; Acts xvii. 26 ; Dan. v. 26. Grounds whereof ; first, God's sovereignty over us, and so his dominion over our times, Acts i. 7. The heir, while under age, hath his time limited, Gal. iv. 1. Secondly, God's faithfulness to us, Ps. cxix. 75. If our times were in our hands, we would never see ill times ; if in Satan's hands, he would never suffer us to see good days. Thirdly, Our aptness to settle upon the

lees, and to corrupt if not changed, Zeph. i. 12; Jer. xlvi. 11; Ps. lv. 19. 2. From the contrary principles dwelling in us; whence variety, yea, contrariety of changes of carriage, Gal. v. 17. 3. From the instability of all the creatures, and their outward estates, by reason of the curse, Gen. iii. 17; which though to the godly it be changed to a cross, yet the cross abideth to them, the curse to the wicked, 1 Kings xiv. 15.

*Use 1.* To wean us from fastening our hopes and desires after happiness in any estate here below, Mat. vi. 19, 20; Prov. xxiii. 5; 1 John ii. 15, 17. The unsettledness of all things here below demonstrateth their unprofitableness unto happiness. 2. To keep us from presuming of our own undertaking, and from possession of absolute purposes and promises, without subjection to the will of God, James iv. 13-15; Luke xii. 19, 23; Prov. xxvii. 1. 3. To moderate our mourning in hard times, and our rejoicings and confidences in good hours, Ps. xxxix. 9, and cxv. 3; Micah vii. 7, 8; Ps. xxx. 6, 7. 4. To stir us up to seek and wait for a settled mansion in heaven, Heb. xiii. 14. 5. To take off the plea for dancing hence; for it is not said there is a lawful time to dance, but a limited time. Herodias' daughter, Salome, had a time to dance, as to earn half a kingdom for a dance, and to get John Baptist's head. So another time, of a contrary dance, when falling through the ice (if we may believe Nicephorus, lib. i. cap. 20) her feet capered under water, and her head being cut off by the ice, it danced above the ice.

We read, first, Of a religious dance, Exod. xv. 20; secondly, Of a civil dance to entertain conquerors, Judges xi. 44; 1 Sam. xviii. 6; Luke xv. 25; when the eyes are set upon joy. But not in marriages, where is more temptation to lust. Tully pro Muræna! *Nemo saltat sobrius nisi forte insaniat, neque solitudine neque in convivio honesto et moderato*: especially it is unmeet in New England, and that now when the churches of England are in such distress, Ezek. xxi. 10.

Ver. 10. *I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.*

Ver. 11. *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time; also he hath set the world in their heart; so that*

*no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.*

Solomon in the former verses of this chapter argueth the vanity that lieth upon the estate and actions of men by reason of the vicissitude and variety of them, and that limited and determined by the appointment of God; and from thence he inferreth the vanity and unprofitableness of men's labours to seek for happiness in creature comforts, ver. 1-9. Now, therefore, lest men should slightly pass over these varieties of changes that pass over them, and make no profitable use of them, as if they came by fortune or change, or God's neglect of the government of the world, Solomon here preacheth to us a fourfold profitable use and observation of them.

1. That God hath given this travail to the sons of men to exercise themselves in observing and finding out God's work in them all, ver. 10; as, 1. Having made every thing beautiful in his season; 2. Having put the world in the hearts of men, ver. 11.

2. That whatsoever our estate be, we should not look to find the chief good in them, but be doing good with them, vers. 12, 13; and take such good from them as they afford, vers. 12, 13.

3. That these changes are wholly and unchangeably in God's hands, and aim at a gracious end, that men should fear before him, ver. 14.

4. That there is to be observed a settled order in this variety of changes, as in the motions of the heavens, ver. 15.

*Doct.* To consider and find out the work of God in all the variety of changes that by his appointment do pass over us, it is a travail given of God to exercise the sons of men. As in searching out the creatures, it was a travail given of God, Eccles. i. 13; so here to search out the work of God in all changes that befalls us, Ps. cxi. 2-4.

*Reason 1.* From the beauty to be observed in every work of God—that is, in every change befalling us—in its season. To the beauty of the body there concur three things: 1. *ὁμοκλήρεια*, when no member is defective or superfluous, good constitution; every main is a blemish, every superfluity is a deformity. 2. *συμμετρία partium*, when one part is proportionable to another, and all suitable to their end and to their head, good proportion. 3. *ἐν-*

*εὐχρία*, well-colouredness, or well-favouredness, good complexion. So in God's works about us there is, 1. A perfection, as in the creatures, Isa. xl. 26, so in his government of us, Deut. ii. 4; Isa. v. 4. 2. A symmetry or proportion, first, Between the Lord and his work, 2 Tim. ii. 13; Ezek. xx. 9, 14, 22. Secondly, Between his former and latter works, Judges vi. 13, 14. Thirdly, Between the instrument and the work God doth by it, *multum refert Davusne loquatur an herus*. Arrogant cruelty becometh Pharaoh; profane blasphemy, Rabshakeh; cursing, Shimei; treason, Judas, Isa. xxxii. 6, 8. Fourthly, Between God's dealings with us, and ours with him, Ps. xviii. 24-26. The wild-fire of lust in Sodom was punished with wild-fire and brimstone. So in destroying the Egyptians' first-born, Exod. iv. 22, 23; so in Nadab and Abihu; so in Adonibezek, Judges i. 6, 7. 3. *εὐχρία*, well-favouredness.

It is a beauty in the countenance: first, Cheerfulness; secondly, Lightsomeness. First, There is a cheerfulness in God's work at last, Gen. xlv. 7, 8; James v. 11; Heb. xii. 11. They have a pleasant countenance, Ps. xcii. 4, and lviii. 10. Secondly, There is a lightsomeness in them, giving light and instruction, Ps. cvii. 43.

*Reason* 2. From God's putting the world into our hearts, ver. 11; where by the world is meant, first, Not only the creatures, the world of them; secondly, But chiefly the world of changes of the creatures, of which Solomon here speaketh—'hath put the world into their hearts'—implieth that God hath put into our hearts, first, Some desire and delight to search and find out the work of God in all the changes that pass over us. So putting into the heart implieth desire and delight in a thing, Ps. xl. 8. Secondly, Ability to do it, Jer. xxxi. 33. Both together are expressed by that phrase, Rev. xvii. 17. The ground of which is our impotency and impossibility, without this putting the world into our hearts, that ever we should find out the work of God from beginning to the end, ver. 11.

*Use* 1. To stir us up to observe and find out the work of God in every change of estate that passeth over us. It is else a brutishness in ourselves, Ps. xcii. 5, 6; it is a dishonour to God and to his works, Isa. v. 12; it is an enlargement of knowledge and favour from God to consider his works, Ps. cvii. 43. As when a good workman

seeth a man taken with his work, he is willing to shew him all his art in it. 2. To teach us not to disparage, or slight, or dislike any of God's works, but to magnify them. They are every one beautiful in his season, Job. xxxvi. 24; Isa. xlv. 9; Ps. lxiv. 9. This magnifying of every work of God, as beautiful in his season, will keep us from discontentment and murmuring at God's providence, whatsoever it be that befalleth us or ours, Job i. 20; Ps. xxxix. 9; 2 Kings xx. 19. It may seem an uncomely thing to take fair and full clusters of sweet grapes, and to tread them and press them in a wine-press, to leave nothing in them but husks, till in the end you see what sweet wine is pressed out of them, which keepeth lively and sweet, when else the grapes left alone would be rotten.

*Use* 3. To teach us to improve and employ that knowledge of the world—that is, of all the changes that befall us in the world—which God hath put into our hearts, to find out the counsel and work of God therein. It was happiness to Esther in her advancement, Esther iv. 14; to David in crosses, Ps. cxix. 67, 71, 75.

*Obj.* Yea, saith one, if I could spell out God's meaning in his works and dealings with myself and mine, it would give me great contentment.

*Ans.* 1. In evils observe, first, What thou wast doing when a cross befell thee, Dan. iv. 30, 31; secondly, What conscience suggesteth to thee, Gen. xlii. 22; thirdly, The proportion of the affliction to thy sin, Judges i. 7; fourthly, Cast all idols out of thy heart, and inquire of the Lord his meaning, that thou mightest know it and do it, Ps. xxv. 9, 12. God was long in answering Johanan and his company, even long after a Sabbath, because they sought in hypocrisy, Jer. xlii. 20.

2. In good things observe, first, The opportunities and advantages God putteth into our hands, according to his word, Esther iv. 14; secondly, The great works God hath in hand; and derive your brooks to run into that stream, Jer. xlv. 4, 5. Now God is advancing a reformation, pursue we that.

Ver. 12. *I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.*

Ver. 13. *And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour: it is the gift of God.*

I know good—that is, the good of man—is not in them. These words contain in them the second profitable observation which Solomon hath made of the variety of the changes of our creature-comforts and discomforts, and employments about them; to wit, that the good of man is not to be found in changes of creature-conditions, and employments or labours about them, but to enjoy the good of them, and to do good with them; which he amplifieth by a twofold argument or reason.

*Reason 1.* From his own certain judgment or experience of them: 'I know that good is not in them,' ver. 12.

*Reason 2.* From the proper cause of any good or comfort that a man can either take himself or give to others by the creatures, or by his labour about them: 'it is the gift of God,' ver. 13.

*Doct.* The good of man is not to be found in the creatures; but it is from the gift of God to do good with them, or to enjoy the good of them. His meaning is not that there is no good in the creature, for that were contrary to Gen. i. 31; but that, 1. The chief good of man is not in them. 2. That it is not in themselves to minister their own good to us without the gift of God, Job xxviii. 2–12, &c., to the end of the chap., Eccles. ii. 24.

*Reason 1.* From the end of all the creatures, and of all their changes about man, and of our labours about them. They are all for us as their end, Ps. cxv. 16; Gen. i. 26; Deut. iv. 19, and therefore our good cannot lie in them; but their good rather lieth in us.

*Reason 2.* From our forfeiture of the good that is in them by the fall, that now the good in which they were created, 1. Is much impaired. 2. Is not yielded to us without a renewed gift from God, Gen. iii. 17–19; which curse is increased by actual sin, Gen. iv. 12; Isa. vii. 23, 24; Lev. xxvi. 18–20; Hag. i. 6, and ii. 16, 17. 3. From the emptiness of our hearts to do any good, or to make any good use of what changes befall us, Hosea xiv. 8; John xv. 5; 2 Cor. iii. 5. 4. From the prerogative of Christ, as to teach us to profit, Isa. xlvi. 17; God in covenant, the Holy One of Israel, our Redeemer.

*Use 1.* To set before us the frame of the spirit of a Christian penitent soul; it knoweth his good is not in the creature, nor in any creature comfort, nor in any creature changes, nor in any creature labours.

*Use 2.* To look for no more from the creatures than is in them, and that way wherein we may get it out of them. Chief good is not in them; nor can they yield that good which is in them, but by the gift of God. With the gift of God, and by it, you may eat and drink, and rejoice in the enjoyment of the good of your labours, and do good to others in your lifetime by the creatures.

*Use 3.* To move men to repentance that have restrained the good of the creatures from themselves, Exod. xxii. 22–24; Jer. v. 24, 25.

*Use 4.* To seek and expect the good of any creature, or of our labour about it, by prayer and faith in the blood of Christ, Mat. vi. 11; 1 Tim. iv. 3–5.

*Use 5.* To stir up such to thankfulness as both take good and do good by all the changes that pass over them. It is God that worketh the power of the will to will, and the power of the whole man to do; and therefore we are to fear before him, Phil. ii. 12, 13, else a wise man may act foolishly, and a strong man weakly, in many fair opportunities.

*Ver. 14.* *I know that; whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.*

Coherence, see in ver. 10, 15.

*Doct.* What God himself doeth, that taketh place in every age, without any addition to it, or taking aught from it by any creature.

The meaning of the words cannot be, that every work of God is everlasting; for no work of God is so, but the angels and souls of men, the highest heavens, and the bodies also of men after the resurrection. But whatsoever God doeth, that shall be for ever; to wit, it shall take place in every age. It is not (to wit, for the creature) to add to it; it is not to take away from it, Ps. xxxiii. 9–11; Eph. i. 11; Job xxiii. 13, 14; Mat. v. 36, and vi. 27; Prov. xix. 21 and xxix. 26; John xix. 10, 11. Some grant a general concurrence of God's providence to everything done by the creature, seeing he sustaineth all things in their life, motion, being; but do not acknowledge a special concurrence to the producing of each particular act, as inclining to it, and determining of it, unless the act be supernatural. But surely, as God inclineth and determineth the will by gifts of grace, by motions of the Spirit. (exciting and enlarging

the heart.) and good objects unto spiritual acts; so doth he incline natural agents to natural acts by natural dispositions; and voluntary agents to moral and civil acts by moral and civil dispositions, motions, objects, Exod. xii. 36; and casual agents to casual events, by casual occurrences.

*Reason 1.* From the nature of God. He is the first and universal cause, Eph. i. 11; Rev. i. 8; Rom. xi. 36, and therefore concurrerth to every effect. Adam, under God, is the first cause of all the sons and daughters of men, Acts xvii. 26; but he is not the cause of all their actions, for he produceth them voluntary agents; and therefore, what they do by choice of their own will, he is no cause of that, seeing he inclineth not, nor determineth their will to it, save only as he propagateth to them natural pravity. Thus, he was not the cause of Cain's murder of Abel, which is more plain in other parents; *causa causæ est causa causati*, holdeth in natural agents, not voluntary. But God is the first cause, not only of all causes, but of all effects: first, Of good things *per se*, James i. 17; Hosea xiv. 8. Secondly, Of evil things, by accident or occasion, Acts iv. 27, 28; 2 Sam. xii. 11, 12.

*Reason 2.* From the nature and condition of the creatures. They are all God's instruments, Heb. i. 14; Isa. x. 5, 15, and xlv. 28; Joel ii. 25; Mat. viii. 8, 9.

*Obj. 1.* The creatures may be said to be God's instruments, because he may and doth use them when he will, not that he doth always use them.

*Ans.* Yes; always, when they work at all. The devil himself, and all his instruments, are indeed but God's instruments. So faith beholdeth them, Job i. 21. Hence always God's ends are more fulfilled than the ends which the instruments aimed at, Gen. xlv. 7, 8, with xxxvii. 20.

*Obj. 2.* Hosea viii. 4.

*Ans.* It is meant, not of his providence, see 1 Kings xii. 24, but of his ordinance.

*Obj. 3.* Zech. i. 15.

*Ans.* They helped forward destruction beyond God's approbation, but not beyond his providence.

*Obj. 4.* What need then of counsels, commandments, rewards, and punishments?

*Ans.* As if the wind need not blow, because a windmill cannot move but in and by the wind.

These commandments and counsels, &c., are the blasts by which God moveth us.

*Obj. 5.* Thus you take away freewill from the creature, not only in acts of spiritual grace, but even in moral and civil actions.

*Ans.* No such matter; for God determineth all actions, not by imposing necessity upon the wil, but by inclining it according to the nature and liberty of it; to wit,

1. In good actions, by, first, Infusing good gifts, Exod. xii. 36; secondly, Exciting by good motions; thirdly, Propounding good objects.

2. In evil actions, by, first, Eliciting the evil with-in into outward act; first, By leaving to Satan, and to evil objects, John xiii. 2; secondly, By propounding good objects, Ps. cv. 24, 25. Secondly, Occasioning the choice of evil, as Adam's fall; first, Making the subjects mutual and declinable; secondly, Giving leave to instruments to tempt, as Satan in the serpent. Thirdly, By propounding objects: fair fruit, good name.

*Use 1.* To teach us to fear before the Lord, text; Phil. ii. 12, 13; Jer. x. 5-7. Our Saviour calleth us to 'fear him, that can cast both body and soul into hell,' Luke xii. 4, 5; how much more to fear him that can cast both body and soul into sin, which is worse than hell, and yet himself most pure and holy in so doing, Isa. vi. 3, 9, 10.

*Use 2.* In God's fear to acknowledge him in all our ways, as those who can do nothing without him, and who worketh all our works for us, Prov. iii. 5, 6; Ps. lvii. 2; Isa. xxvi. 12.

*Use 3.* To look higher than the creature in all things befalling us, which will train us up to, 1. Patience in evils. 2. Contentment in evils, Job i. 21; 2 Sam. xvi. 10; Ps. xxxix. 9. 3. Thankfulness for that which is good, Gen. xxxiii. 10; Neh. ii. 8; Ezra vii. 27. 4. Fruitfulness, or making a good use of all occurrences, whether good or evil, befalling us. If God's hands be in everything, surely good may be gathered out of it, Ps. cxvi. 16; Amos iv. 6, 8, 11. 5. Courage in all approaching danger; all our hairs are numbered; a sparrow falleth not to the ground without God, Mat. x. 29, 30.

*Use 4.* To teach us the vanity of all human endeavours and purposes without God, James iv. 13-16.

Ver. 15. *That which hath been is now: and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.*

Coherence, see above, ver. 10, 11.

These words express the fourth observable thing in the changeable course of God's providence about the sons of men; to wit, that there is a settled order and constancy in that instability, as there is in the motions of the heavens and heavenly bodies. There is great variety of changes in the moon, yet great constancy in that variety; as it was in one month, so in another.

Solomon had such a like speech before, Eccles. i. 9, 10; but there he speaks of the works of creation or of nature, as spring, summer, autumn, winter, &c., but here he speaketh of the work of providence.

*That which hath been is now, &c.* Not that the same individual things shall return again, for dead men shall return no more into this world, Job vii. 8-10; neither doth he speak of God's extraordinary and miraculous actions, whether of judgment or mercy, Exod. x. 14; Deut. iv. 32, 33; Joshua x. 12-14; 2 Kings xx. 11; nor of the rare and singular inventions of men, as of printing, or guns, &c. But he speaketh of the works of God's ordinary providence, in disposing of the variable changes of the estates and affairs of the sons of men: which though they be carried with great variety, yet are they carried also with great stability and correspondency, and suitableness one to another.

*Doct.* 1. The former ways and works of God in disposing of the estates of the sons of men. God bringeth them about again from one generation to another, 2 Pet. ii. 4-9; Rom. xi. 21; Jer. vii. 12-14; Ps. xlvi. 8; 1 Cor. x. 11. God's former dealings with the sons of men in former times are precedents of what he will do in after ages.

*Reason* 1. From God's nature, which is ever like itself, Heb. xiii. 8, 10, 12, 28, 29; Mal. iii. 6. 2. From the correspondency of God's works to his word. Every work of God fulfilleth either some promise in the word, or some threatening; now the word is ever suitable to itself; so is God's work. The examples of God's dealings in Scripture would be of no use to us, if they were not precedents and patterns of the like to be performed in like cases in after times, 1 Cor. x. 11; Rom. xi. 21; Joshua

i. 5; with Heb. xiii. 5; James v. 11, and ver. 17, 18.

*Use* 1. Against Manichees, who think one God to have governed in the Old Testament, another in the New. But the suitable carriage of all things now, as then, argueth the same hand to rule both then and now, Heb. xii. 29. It is also a refutation of fortune; for fortune is not stable, nor keepeth any certain or proportionable course. 2. To lend both comfort and stay, and warning also, to God's people, from the course of God's providence to his people of old, Ps. xxii. 4, 5, and lxxvii. 10, 11; yea, from God's former dealings with ourselves, Ps. lxxvii. 6; 1 Sam xvii. 34-37; warning also, Heb. xii. 28, 29; Ps. xcix. 6-8. Beware of breaches in general course;<sup>1</sup> it will presage and produce like effects, as breach of parliaments hath done in England. 3. To threaten to wicked men like judgments which have befallen others for like sins in former ages, Dan. v. 18-28; 2 Pet. ii. 4-9; Jude 11; Job iv. 8. 4. To teach the children of God to persevere in like constancy, and to keep a holy correspondency in all their actions and courses, that we may be like to our heavenly Father.

Ver. 16. *And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.*

Ver. 17. *I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.*

In the former part of the chapter Solomon shewed the vanity of the estates of men, by an argument taken from the changes and vicissitude which the determinate hand and providence of God did put upon them. In these verses he observeth and declareth another vanity that befalleth our estates by the hand and government of magistrates; yea, a vanity that befalleth upon judgment-seats themselves. The vanity is wickedness, which is both, first, Ungodliness, 2 Sam. xxii. 22; secondly, Unrighteousness, Isa. lviii. 4, 9. And lest this vanity should cast some blemish upon the wise and just providence of God (whereof penitent souls are more tender) he declareth his resolution of that doubt, what it was in his own heart, that God will judge

<sup>1</sup> Query, 'Courts'? viz., church-courts.—Ed.



righteously, and so reform all the iniquity of judgment-seats; and this he proveth by a principle delivered in ver. 1 of this chapter, taken from the time appointed for every purpose and every work there, ver. 17.

*Doct. 1.* He that shall live in the best times of the best commonwealths, may see seats of judgments and justice corrupted with wickedness and iniquity. The word *wickedness* signifieth both, first, Ungodliness, 2 Sam. xxii. 22; secondly, Unrighteousness, or iniquity, Isa. lviii. 4, 6. Solomon speaketh not of markets, or taverns, or stews, or mountains of prey, (Stand-gate Hole, Shooter's Hill, Blackheath, Salisbury Plain, &c.) but of seats of law and justice; and that not in the reign of wicked tyrants, Saul, Ahab, Jezebel, or the like, but in the times wherein himself lived, which were the best which the best commonwealth, the commonwealth of Israel, ever saw, even the times of David and Solomon. In David's time, 2 Sam. xix. 24-30, with xvi. 4; in his time, and Solomon's, Eccles. x. 5-7; 1 Kings xi. 6-8, and xii. 4; in Asa's time, 2 Chron. xvi. 10; in Jehoshaphat's, 2 Chron. xviii. 1, and xx. 33-37; in Uzziah's and Jotham's, Isa. i. 21-23, v. 7, and iii. 12, 15; in Hezekiah's, Micah vii. 3, 4, and iii. 9-12, with Jer. xxvi. 18; in Josiah's, Zeph. i. 1, 9, and iii. 1, 3.

*Reason 1.* Acceptance of persons; in the princes promoting their kinsmen or friends, though unworthy, to judgment seats, as Samuel promoted his sons, 1 Sam. viii. 1, 3.

*Reason 2.* Misinformation, and receiving it without hearing both parties speak, 2 Sam. xvi. 1-4, with chap. xix. 26, 29.

*Reason 3.* Wicked servants or counsellors about a prince, Prov. xxv. 4, 5; 1 Kings xii. 8-11.

*Reason 4.* Self-sufficiency, leaning to a man's own wisdom, Joshua xiv. 15; Prov. iii. 5-7.

*Reason 5.* Bribes or gifts, 1 Sam. viii. 3; Exod. xxiii. 8; Prov. xxviii. 21.

*Use 1.* To teach us not to wonder, if we find sometime the like errors here in our courts. We are to humble ourselves for the sins of our courts, Isa. lix. 14-16; 2 Chron. xix. 10. It may be every one will not judge it an iniquity to fine the injury of twenty pounds, at two hundred; we read of restoration twofold, fourfold, sevenfold, but never one hundredfold. But is it not a wickedness to

suffer blasphemy to pass unpunished, and sodomitical rapes? What will become of rigour without mercy, is yet unknown.

*Use 2.* To teach men of place, first, Not to affect seats of justice; they will not secure them. Secondly, To prevent these errors: which is done by, 1. God's fear, 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7; 2. Not judging by the hearing of the ear, Isa. xi. 3, 4, unless both ears be open; 3. Rejection of gifts, Isa. xxxiii. 15.

*Use 3.* To refute the pope's infallibility of judgment; for he hath not such a promise of infallibility, as the king hath, Prov. xvi. 10.

*Use 4.* To moderate men's eagerness to suits-at-law.

*Obj.* Why, may I not sue for my right?

*Ans.* But can you tell that you shall attain your right by suit?

*Use 5.* To teach us private censurers may err much more, who have not received like promises.

*Doct. 2.* God will find a time to judge both the righteous and wicked, with every purpose (or will) and every work, ver. 17. Not only at the last judgment, Mat. xii. 36; 1 Cor. iv. 5; Eccles. xii. 14; but even in this life, Prov. xi. 31; Ps. ix. 4, 12, 16, vii. 11-16, and lxxvi. 9, 10; Exod. xxii. 22-24.

*Reason 1.* The glory of God, Ps. ix. 16, and l. 26.

*Reason 2.* The restraint and check of the rage and pride of men, Ps. ix. 20.

*Reason 3.* The groans, and sighs, and expectation of the poor afflicted, Ps. xii. 5, and ix. 18.

*Use 1.* To exhort to watchfulness in judgment-seats, and against all secret unrighteousness, Eccles. xii. 14.

*Use 2.* To exhort to quietness of spirit, when wrong judgment proceedeth, Eccles. v. 8.

Ver. 18. *I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.*

Ver. 19. *For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath: so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity.*

Ver. 20. *All go unto one place: all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.*

Ver. 21. *Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth*

upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

Ver. 22. *Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?*

Solomon, having observed a vanity that befalleth the estates of men—first, By the overruling providence of God limiting all their changes, vers. 1–14; secondly, By the hand and government of courts of justice over other men, vers. 16, 17. Lest this should reflect any dishonour upon the providence of God, whereby he governeth all things in the world wisely, righteously, holily, he taketh up and giveth himself and others a twofold satisfaction in this point, from a twofold meditation: 1. From the order which God will take to redress all the iniquities of courts of justice, both in this and in another world, ver. 17. 2. From the end which God aimeth at in leaving of courts of justice to such iniquity, which is double: first, God doth it to try them; secondly, He doth it to let them see they are as beasts one to another, ver. 18. And to convince them the more of this latter, that men be but beasts, he argueth it not only from their usage of one another as beasts, but from sundry events common to them with beasts; that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beasts, to both alike. Which he argueth, first, for their bodies, in three particulars: 1. In the likeness of their deaths; as one dieth, so dieth the other. 2. In the likeness of their breath; they have all one breath, ver. 19. 3. In their burial and resolution of their bodies; all turn to the dust, as they came from it. Secondly, For the soul or spirit of man which goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward; this difference is not known or acknowledged, discerned or considered, by men generally—to wit, not by natural men at all, ver. 21. From whence he taketh this corollary, that seeing a man can take so little comfort or contentment in the estate or course of other men, therefore so to live as a man may rejoice in his own works, ver. 22: which he proveth, first, from the propriety he hath in that course—it is his portion; secondly, From the impossibility to know what shall be after him, ver. 22, or from his uncertainty of future events. To gather up all the points here delivered into a narrow room, all may be com-

prised in one note of doctrine; the reasons thereof, and the uses thereof also, let us handle them.

*Doct. 1.* He that shall ponder in his heart, and consider the estate of the sons of men, shall find that God would have men to say they are as beasts, ver. 18, 19. That which Solomon, upon serious pondering in his heart the estates of the sons of men, did resolve and say, that God doth this or that about them, that they might see themselves to be as beasts, the same another Christian, pondering the matter in his heart, may discern, resolve it, and say it, Ps. xlix. 12, 20, and lxxiii. 32; Prov. xxx. 2, 'More brutish than any man,' which implieth that, first, All men are brutish; secondly, He more than others. When God will clear it to Peter that he might converse with all sorts of men, he shews him in a vision that God would have him eat of all beasts, Acts x. 12, 13, 28.

*Reason 1.* From the violent and fraudulent and beastly oppression of men in authority over the poor people, Prov. xxviii. 15; Zeph. iii. 3; Luke xiii. 32; Ps. x. 9; Dan. vii. 4–7; Ezek. xxi. 31; Gen. x. 9; 1 Sam. xxvi. 20.

*Reason 2.* From the like occurrences or events befalling their outward man or body in their, first, Lives; both alike subject to hunger, cold, heats, labour, weariness, sickness, pains—yea, man's body more subject to these than the beast's. Secondly, Deaths; both mortal alike, whether, 1. By a natural death; 2. By a violent death, as hanging, drowning, stoning, burning, stabbing, &c.; 3. Burials, first, Both alike resolved to dust as they come from it, excepting some specially privileged, as Christ, Enoch, Elijah; secondly, Both subject to base contempt, Jer. xxii. 19.

*Reason 3.* From men's prostituting of their souls to like or worse conditions than that of the souls of beasts, who, of all the sons of men, in an estate of vanity, (or nature,) considereth or knoweth—that is acknowledged—the difference of his soul which goeth upwards, from the soul of the beast which goeth downwards? For men cleave to earthly things to maintain this life, as do the beasts; both alike follow their sensual appetites. Immortal food and raiment of the soul is generally neglected. The immortal soul cannot feed upon bodily meats and drinks, nor be satisfied with silver or gold, but with

the favour of God, the blood of Christ, the gifts of the Spirit, the ordinances of God, communion of saints, &c., all which are neglected.

*Use 1.* To teach us to look at magistrates and courts of justice as set up of God for trial of men, as well as for other ends. To try, first, Magistrates themselves—*Magistratus indicat virum*. Place of government trieth the spirit of a man, whether it be just or corrupt, liberal or covetous, valiant or fearful, for God or for man. Secondly, Subjects, Prov. xxviii. 12—for *hidden*, read *tried* or *searched*, as Prov. xx. 27; Gen. xlv. 12. Subjects tried in their—1. Faith, Heb. xi. 36; 1 Pet. iv. 12. 2. Patience, Luke xxi. 19. 3. Obedience, Acts iv. 19. Let magistrates look at their places as furnaces to try them. Let people look at magistrates, especially unjust ones, as sent of God to try them.

*Use 2.* To teach all self-debasement. Magistrates, when they prove unjust, rule over the people as beasts, and all the people naturally live as beasts that perish, labouring for the meat that perisheth; and so for perishing raiment, honour, pleasure, and profit. Ever since we affected to become as gods, Gen. iii. 5, we fell to be like the beasts, whence God clothed our parents fallen with the skins of beasts, Gen. iii. 21. Yea, our bravest clothing is with webs of silk-worms, as, 1. Expressing whom we are like, Job xxv. 6; 2. Presaging what we shall one day be covered with, Job xvii. 14, and xxi. 26.

*Use 3.* To stir us up to consider better of our souls, and to make better provision for them, lest we live and die like beasts, Job vi. 27.

*Use 4.* To refute the popish opinion of *limbus patrum*, which they place in the earth beneath, *Bellar. de Purgat.*, lib. ii. cap. 6. But here we see the souls of men before Christ's resurrection went upward.

*Use 5.* To teach us so to live as we may rejoice in our works. There is little comfort in living like beasts that perish, but there is rejoicing in a Christian course, Isa. vi. 4, 5; 2 Cor. i. 12.

*Motives.* First, It is our portion, Eccles. iii. 22, as that which, 1. Maintaineth us with necessaries, conveniences, and delights for the present, Prov. xvi. 8. 2. Maketh up all other losses and crosses, Acts xx. 23, 24; Ps. lxxiii. 26. 3. Maketh provision for another world, 1 Tim. vi. 17-19; Luke xvi. 9, and xii. 33.

Secondly, Uncertainty of future events. If we leave our good works to be done by our last wills and testaments, it is uncertain how they may be fulfilled.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1. *So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.*

Ver. 2. *Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive.*

Ver. 3. *Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.*

In this chapter Solomon proceedeth to declare other vanities that befall the estates of the sons of men in this world, over and besides the vanity which befell them either by the just and wise government of God's providence, or by the unjust administration of men's government or judgment-seats. In the estates of men do arise the vanities here observed: first, From the neglect of compassion to men oppressed, ver. 1-3; secondly, From envy, ver. 4; thirdly, From idleness, ver. 5, 6; fourthly, From covetousness, ver. 7, 8; fifthly, From solitariness, ver. 9-12; sixthly, From wilfulness, ver. 13-16. Solomon, turning his mind from considering former vanities, and now considering oppressions, he fasteneth his thoughts chiefly upon the sad and pitiful estate of men oppressed.

This estate is set forth, first, By their adjunct, want of comfort or succour: 'And they had no comforter,' twice repeated. Secondly, By the contrary strength and store of power in their oppressors, so great that some translate that the oppressed had no power of escaping from it, and the words may bear both, ver. 1. Thirdly, By the effect which then it wrought in himself: to wit, to praise, 1. The dead above the living, ver. 2; 2. The unborn above the other, ver. 3.

*Doct.* 1. It is a vanity that befalleth the estates of men under the sun, that men of power abuse it to oppression; and a further vanity that men oppressed, though lamentably oppressed, yet have no

comforter; and yet a further vanity, that a wise man, even a godly wise man, considering this, is subject to wax weary of his life, Micah ii. ; ver. 1, 2; 1 Kings xxi. 7; Ps. lviii. 2; yea, Moses the meekest on earth, Num. xii. 3.

*Reason* of abusing the power: first, The power of corrupt nature, which will have a time to put forth itself to the utmost, Jer. iii. 5; secondly, Folly and arrogance joined with power, 1 Kings xii. 10, 11.

*Reason* of no comforter: first, Neglect of God's fear, Job vi. 14; secondly, Fear of men, 1 Sam. xxiii. 11, 12; thirdly, The strength of God's wrath, who, when he chasteneth, he will suffer none to help, Job ix. 13, and xxxiv. 29; Ps. lxxxviii. 18, with xxxviii. 11; fourthly, Contempt of men cast down, Job xii. 5; fifthly, Sensuality, Amos vi. 4-6; sixthly, Inhumanity, Luke x. 30-32; seventhly, Scruple of conscience, through difference of religion, John iv. 7, 9; Luke ix. 52, 53.

*Reason* of wise men's weariness of life to behold or feel this: first, Distemper of their minds, Eccles. vii. 7, through, 1. Judging of things according to sense, not according to faith; 2. Doubt of God's providence in temptation; 3. Impatience, Luke xxi. 19. Secondly, Depth and tenderness of compassion and zeal, which maketh them utterly unwilling to behold the violence of oppressors through zeal, Hab. i. 2, 12, 13, and tears of the oppressed through compassion, Hab. i. 3; Jer. ix. 1, 2.

*Use* of the abuse of power to oppression: first, To behold the vanity of all estates by the fall. Power, which was given to help the afflicted, is abused to crush them; thus greater men, as fishes, devour the less, Hab. i. 14. Secondly, To warn men of power to beware of the abuse.

*Use* of no comforter: 1. To teach all men oppressed to seek first to make their peace with God; for if he be angry, the strong helpers fail, Job ix. 13, and xxxiv. 29; secondly, To teach such as behold the tears of the afflicted, to cast out such corruptions and temptations as might hinder our compassion, as these before spoken of—neglect of God's fear, fear of men, contempt, sensuality, inhumanity, scruple of conscience, Heb. xiii. 3; Gal. vi. 10; Luke x. 33-37.

*Quest.* How may I know when God calleth me to succour and comfort a man afflicted or oppressed?

*Ans.* When three things concur: 1. His necessity, Job xxxi. 19, and xxix. 12, 17; 2. My ability, Prov. iii. 27, 28; 3. God offering opportunity, Luke x. 33; Gal. vi. 10.

*Use* of the wise man's weariness of life to behold this: first, To teach godly wise men to beware of a snare in the best virtues. It is a gracious and precious virtue, tenderness of compassion to men of misery; and yet the beholding of men in misery may breed in the wisest a discontentment and weariness of life. Secondly, To teach us in such a case rather to live by faith in suffering oppression ourselves, Heb. x. 34, or beholding the afflictions of others, Eccles. v. 8.

*Use* of all the three parts of the doctrine. If men of power be apt to abuse their power to oppression, and men oppressed do often find no comforter, and that a wise good man, considering this, be subject to wax weary of his life, then it may teach us to be compassionate and succourful to the oppressed. This may heal and prevent the two latter vanities and remove the first, Job vi. 14, xix. 21, and xxix. 25; Luke x. 33; 1 Pet. iii. 8; Rom. xii. 15, Ps. lxxii. 4.

*Motives.* First, God's example, 2 Cor. vii. 6; Ps. cxlvi. 7, and cxlv. 8, 9; and his example is of necessary imitation in such cases, Mat. xviii. 33; Prov. xii. 10; Exod. xxiii. 5. Secondly, Danger upon neglect of it: 1. From God, Exod. xxii. 22-24; Lam. ii. 13; Amos vi. 6, 7; Ps. cix. 12; 2. From conscience, Gen. xlii. 21, 22, or else scaredness or hardness contracted after softness by God's just judgment; 3. From man, 1 Sam. xii. 5, 6, 7; Ps. lxxii. 4. Thirdly, Community of condition, Heb. xiii. 3; Job iii. 13-15.

*Application.* 1. To the prisoner to help his conscience to sight and sense of his sins, and so to repentance.<sup>1</sup> His servant was diseased with the scurvy, which maketh the body weak and lifeless; and when nature is grown weak, the retentive faculty is weakened that he hath no hold of his excrements.

<sup>1</sup> It would appear that a sentence has been dropped from the text. The description is of severities inflicted on a slave by his master, who caused his death, and pleaded that he intended his reformation.—ED.

In this case compassion would have looked out healing medicines, wholesome diet, warm keeping; what compassion was there in immoderate whipping? It is Egyptian cruelty, Exod. v. 7, 8, 14. 2. Striking on the head with a cudgel, leaving wounds and bruises. 3. Diet with the lights of a dead beast. 4. Washing his naked body in cold water, when ice and snow lay upon the ground, and putting on a cold and wet shirt, and kept out from fire. 5. Hanging him over the fire in the smoke. 6. Binding him on horseback, and he not being able to sit, fell on one side till blood issued at mouth, nose, and ears; denying him a draught of water; upon this he dieth.

*Obj.* But his intention was not to hurt him, at least mortally, but to reform him.

*Ans.* Sundry of these acts are not intended of God for reformation, as such diet, washing in cold water, wet apparel, and then kept from fire, hanging over the fire with smoke, bruises on the head. 2. Intention to destroy is no necessary ingredient to murder; as in case, first. Of knocking a servant when death followeth, Exod. xx. 20, 21. If one or two violent strokes of correction on which death followeth be capital, is it not alike capital to shorten life by many acts of rigour, hastening death by degrees? Secondly, Of killing a child in the womb, Exod. xxi. 22, 23. Thirdly, Of not keeping up a goring ox, Exod. 21, 29. Two things be requisite to make casual killing murder: viz., 1. To be conversant *in re illicita*, whence death followeth, as the Benjamites in defiling the Levite's concubine, Judges xix. 25, 26. 2. *In re licita non adhibere debitam diligentiam ad evitandum mortale periculum*: as in these three cases. Hence, such as give *poculum amatorium*, whence death followeth, *summo supplicio afficiuntur*, Co., tom. i., part 1, col. 2, page 592. It is done, *licet non malo animo*, yet *malo exemplo*.

*Obj.* 2. Most of his hard usage was before his first coming to prison, after which he began to recover.

*Ans.* First, It argueth the prison was better to him than his master's house. In prison he mended and began to recover; in his master's house he relapsed and decayed. Secondly, His disease was never thoroughly cured, and therefore all his hard usage before and after imprisonment tended to increase his disease and hasten his death.

Ver. 4. *Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.*

Solomon having shewed the vanity that befalleth the estates of the sons of men by oppression, in ver. 1-3, he now in this verse speaketh of the vanity that befalleth them by reason of envy, ver. 4, and then proceedeth to speak of the vanity that befalleth a man from himself through, first, Idleness, ver. 5, 6; secondly, Covetousness, ver. 7, 8; thirdly, Solitariness, ver. 9-12; fourthly, Wilfulness, ver. 13-16.

*Doct.* It is a vanity afflicting the spirits of men, that when a man's work is right, and he hath taken pains to do that which is good and right, yet for all this he shall be envied of his neighbours.

*Reason of envy at good*: first, Pride of heart and excessive self-love; for envy is the sadness of the heart for the good that we see in another, in regard so much glory (or praise) seemeth to be taken from us as is given to him. Eliab taxed that in David which was his own sin, I Sam. xvii. 28. Hence hatred of our brother, as wishing him deprived of the good he hath. Secondly, Profane and rebellious infidelity; for either we do not believe that our brother hath these gifts given him of God, (for if we did, it would mortify envy, John iii. 26, 27,) and this is profane infidelity; or else, if we believe they were given him of God, it is rebellious infidelity to grudge against God's goodness, Mat. xx. 15. Thirdly, Want of union with Christ, and communion with our brethren; for if we were united to Christ by faith, and one to another by brotherly love, the glory of Christ would be a comfort to us, by whomsoever advanced, Phil. i. 16-19; and if we were united in brotherly love one to another, the honour of one member would be the joy of another, I Cor. xii. 26. One finger envieth not another that weareth a gold ring, as taking it for an ornament of the whole hand—yea, of the whole body.

*Reason why it is afflictive*: first, To the envious person it rotteth and wasteth the vigour of body and spirit, Prov. xiv. 30. Secondly, To the person envied, 1. It is dangerous, threatening loss of life, as in Abel, Joseph, David, Daniel, Christ; it is murder, Prov. xxvii. 4. 2. It is uncomfortable and grievous to see a man's self so ill-beloved, that his good should be another man's harm.

*Use.* To reprove the envious person. See how many foul sins are wrapped up in his heart—sins against God, his neighbour, and himself. See the Reason.

It argueth weakness and baseness of spirit. *Quorum similitudinem desperant, eorum affectant similitatem, Apul. Flo., lib. i.* It is weakness of eyes to water and run at the sight of light. Yea, it is next step to the sin against the Holy Ghost. Both malign others for their goodness, only the one maligneth it as it is the grace of God, or glory of Christ; the other as it is a glory to a neighbour. Such as grieve at others' good would rejoice in their evil; love grieveth at the evil of another, but envy grieveth at the good of another.

*Means* against this sin: first, Faith to discern whence gifts spring, John iii. 27; secondly, Love to look at them as given to our use. What if all the town were good physicians, and I only had no skill that way? The more ready help it would be to me. What though Deborah did not kill Sisera, but Jael? yet Deborah rejoiceth in it heartily, Judges v. 24.

*Use 2.* To teach men in well-doing what to expect—not applause, not encouragement, but envy. And yet not thereby to be discouraged from well-doing; not to think it strange to find such unchristian entertainment, even amongst Christians.

*Ver. 5. The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.*

*Ver. 6. Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.*

Solomon, having shewed the vanity that befalleth men through oppression and envy, he proceedeth to shew the vanity that befalleth the estate of men through idleness; where he describeth the idle person, first, By his adjunct of folly, *the fool*; secondly, By his cessation from action, and his composing himself to that cessation, *a fool foldeth his hands together*; thirdly, By the cause of that his cessation or restiness, a deceitful imagination of the betterment of a handful, with ease and quietness, than of both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit, ver. 6.

*Doct. 1.* An idle person, by his forbearance of labour, maketh himself both a fool and a beggar; or a man that withholdeth himself from labour, doth both befool and undo himself. Folding of the hands

together is an act of an idle or slothful person, first, Withholding himself from labour; secondly, Composing himself to rest or sleep. Prov. xxiv. 30, 33, and vi. 10. It is all one whether he fold his fingers together, or fold his arms together; put his hands into his pocket or bosom, Prov. xix. 24. All alike express cessation from labour, with a mind to forbear it.

*Reasons* of befooling himself: first, It is folly to mistake names and natures of things, especially to delude ourselves with false names. To account and call that to be quietness which is idleness, slothfulness, sluggishness; to account diligent labour, travail, vexation of spirit. Secondly, It is folly to think a handful will be gotten with idleness, whereas nothing will be so gotten, Prov. xiii. 4, and xx. 4, and xxiii. 21, and xxiv. 34. Thirdly, It is folly to think that a handful, gotten with ease and idleness, is better than both the handfals with diligent labour, whereas a little gotten with labour is more precious and comfortable, Eccles. v. 12; Prov. xii. 27. Fourthly, It is folly, yea, a foolish tempting of God, to separate the end from the means; to expect maintenance without labour, Gen. iii. 17; Prov. x. 4. Fifthly, It is a like folly to separate the mean from the end, God having given hands to labour, mind and wit to employ in some honest calling, for private and public good ends, which to neglect is a slothful folly, Mat. xxv. 26. Sixthly, It is a folly for a man to prefer his wisdom and practice above others who exel him, ver. 6. This folly is very incident to idle persons, Prov. xxvi. 16.

*Reasons* of undoing himself: first, By wasting and neglecting the means of his subsistence, Prov. xviii. 9; Eccles. x. 18; Prov. xx. 4. No man's estate is infinite or bottomless, Prov. xxvii. 24–27. Secondly, By breeding diseases, wasting the body. Rest to the body is as rust to metal. 3. By corrupting the mind with wantonness, pride, folly, Ezek. xvi. 49. Standing pools gather mud and venomous vermin. 4. By wasting a man's kindred also, who are his own flesh.

*Use 1.* To wean us from idleness, as that which maketh us both fools and beggars. See all the particulars in the reasons.

It is a sin against the third commandment, as spending our time and talents in vain. Against the

fourth commandment, as not labouring six days, and so unfitting us for rest on the seventh. Against the fifth commandment, Prov. x. 5. Against the sixth commandment, in the text. Against the seventh commandment, Ezek. xvi. 49. Against the eighth commandment, Prov. x. 4, xix. 15, and xx. 4. Idleness is counted a gentleman's life, but it is a base and foolish condition.

*Use 2.* To observe the deceitfulness of sin, to cover and colour idleness with the name of quietness, but labour with the name of travail and vexation of spirit. Self-love maketh us apt to make a good construction of our own ways. The vicinity or nearness of virtue and vice maketh us apt to mistake and miscall one for another.

*Use 3.* To teach parents to train up their children in a way of diligence. If either parent be idle, children will follow the worse part. God gave Christ a calling to be king, priest, and prophet to his church. The angels have all a calling, Heb. i. 14; Adam in paradise, a gardener, Gen. ii. 15; Cain, a husbandman; Abel, a shepherd; Noah, a vine-dresser. Kings must be diligent and provident, Prov. xxvii. 23-27; queens, housewives, Prov. xxxi.

*Use 4.* To teach us to labour most in our chiefest work, 2 Pet. i. 10; Phil. ii. 12.

*Ver. 7. Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.*

*Ver. 8. There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.*

In the former verses next going before, Solomon observed the vanity that befalleth the estates of the sons of men through idleness. In these two verses he observeth as great a vanity that befalleth the sons of men through needless painfulness,—to wit, the painfulness that covetous men put themselves to without, 1. Cause; 2. End; 3. Satisfaction; 4. Recreation, or refreshing; 5. Consideration.

First, Without cause; he is a lone man, hath no second, no wife, child, nor brother. Secondly, Without end; no end of all his labour, no term of it. Thirdly, Without satisfaction; his eye is not satis-

fied with riches. Fourthly, Without refreshing; he bereaveth his soul of good. Fifthly, Without consideration; he considereth not, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? but not without vanity and sore travail and affliction.

*Doct.* It is a vanity and sore travail or affliction that a lone man should put himself to endless and restless labour for riches, and yet neither his eye satisfied with it, nor himself refreshed by it, nor he so much as to consider with himself for whose sake he taketh so much pains, and so little ease and comfort.

*A lone man*, one that hath no second,—that is, (1.) No wife; (2.) No child; (3.) No brother.

*Yet there is no end of his labour.* No end, no term or cessation; for  $\psi\psi$  signifieth not an end of intention, but an end of cessation.

*Neither is his eye satisfied with riches*,—that is, his desire, covetous desire, which looketh out of the windows of his eyes, hence covetousness is called the lusts of the eyes, 1 John ii. 16; the eyes being that which, 1. Breedeth covetousness, John vii. 21; 2. Is only fed by it, Eccles. v. 11. He defraudeth, first, His body of wholesome diet, physic, recreation, sleep, Eccles. x. 12; secondly, His name of honour; thirdly, His soul of grace, Luke viii. 14.

1. *Reason*, why without cause. First, From the just hand of God upon a man that seeketh not, nor taketh the Lord for his God and sovereign good, that he shall make the creature, mammon, his god, and so seek it for himself; as a godly man labours hard to enjoy more of God, whether he have any childreun or brethren to leave him to or no, Mat. vi. 21. Secondly, From the ambitious end of some that, leaving a great estate behind them, it may be said they lived not like drones, or idle bees, or prodigals, or shallow shuttlecocks, but knew how to live and thrive in the world, Hab. ii. 5. He is a proud man, &c.

2. *Reason*, why without end. First, From want of satisfaction in riches, Eccles. v. 10. Secondly, From want of attaining a man's proper place when he hath attained never so great wealth. A stone resteth and ceaseth to move when it is fallen to the earth, which is its proper place. But a covetous man ceaseth not his labour, because his wealth is not his proper place.

3. *Reason*, why without satisfaction. First, From the insufficiency, 1. Of bodily things to satisfy a spirit; 2. Of temporal and transitory things to satisfy an eternal and immortal soul. Secondly, From the unnaturalness of this lust. It is a disease like the dropsy, which is increased by drinking; yea, it is a lust set on fire from hell, Hab. ii. 5.

4. *Reason*, why without refreshing. First, From the curse upon creature comforts, Gen. iii. 17. Thorns and thistles is their fruit, they pierce the heart through, 1 Tim. vi. 10.

5. *Reason*, why without satisfaction. First, From the nature of sensual and earthly things—they stupefy the heart; hence they are said to choke, Mat. xiii. 22. Secondly, From the curse of God upon idolatry; idols, and they that worship them, are alike senseless, Ps. cxv. 8; Isa. xlv. 18–20.

*Use 1.* To observe, that sometimes men of great estates, and great dexterity and industry to get great estates, may yet want children and kindred to leave it to, as Nabal, 1 Sam. xxv. 11; and Abraham, long, Gen. xv. 2, with xvii. 17. As on the contrary some men have wives and store of children, and poor kindred to leave it to, and yet want estate to leave them. Thus, first, There lieth a vanity upon all men's estates. The poor eateth his bread with sorrow, because he hath so little for so great a household; the rich, because he hath not whom to leave it to. Secondly, God bestoweth his gifts severally; to some children and kindred, but no riches—to others riches, but no children or kindred. Which, first, Sheweth the emptiness of riches, that can get neither children on earth, nor father in heaven; secondly, Calleth upon others for more thankfulness, who have both wealth and children.

*Use 2.* To teach such as have children to be more diligent in their calling, and to be more provident in their expenses; for Solomon counteth it a vanity and sore travail, for men that want children to take such pains; not for them that have many, 2 Cor. xii. 14; 1 Tim. v. 8. It is engrafted in nature, the old to provide for the young; the want whereof God accounteth want of understanding in the ostrich, and cruelty, Job xxxix. 14–17.

*Use 3.* To teach the wife her due place. She is a second, not a first; she is not above her husband,

for he is her head, Eph. v. 23, nor beneath children or brethren.

*Use 4.* To dissuade from covetousness. It tireth out body and mind with restless labour and care. It yieldeth neither satisfaction nor refreshing. It stupefieth and besotteth the heart.

*Use 5.* For a sign of covetousness. It setteth a man upon more labour than cause; we rather covet wealth, than consider what to do with it. We bereave ourselves of many useful comforts.

*Use 6.* To labour for such wealth as will satisfy, and which will not bereave the soul of good, but feed and refresh it with the chief good, Isa. lv. 2, 3.

Ver. 9. *Two are better than one; because they have a good reward of their labour.*

Ver. 10. *For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him.*

Ver. 11. *Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?*

Ver. 12. *And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

Upon occasion of speech of the vanity that befalleth the lonesome estate of men by covetousness, he declareth another vanity that befalleth a lonesome estate of men, though covetousness be wanting, through unprofitableness and helplessness; and therefore preferreth the society of two, and much more of three, before lonesomeness, and that in all the affairs which are incident to human life. Which are all of them either, first, Voluntary, of which kind he putteth in, as in the rest, one example for many: as labour; two have a better reward for their labour, ver. 9. Secondly, Casual; if the one fall, the other shall help up his fellow; which he amplifieth by the woe or misery that may befall a lonesome man in such case for want of help, ver. 10. Thirdly, Natural; if two lie together, then they have heat; amplified by denial of warmth to one alone, ver. 11. Fourthly, Violent; if one prevail against him, two shall withstand; which he amplifieth by a proverbial *epiphonema*, 'A threefold cord is not easily broken,' ver. 12.

*Doct.* Society in all sorts of human affairs is better than solitariness.



Some conceive this place spoken in praise of marriage, and preferment of it above single life; but though that have a place here, marriage being one kind of society, yet is not marriage only here meant. Yea, the proverb of a threefold cord doth not so fitly agree to that: polygamy is not preferred before digamy, I mean before the marriage of two, one man with one woman.

First, In voluntary affairs, God would have two workmen chief about the ark—1. Bezalel; 2. Aholiab, Exod. xxxi. 2, 6. The Egyptians in Pierius's hieroglyphics expressed the unprofitableness of a solitary man by one millstone, which alone grindeth no meal, but with his fellow-is most serviceable to prepare meal, and so bread for man. In the body all instruments of action are made by pairs, as hands, feet, eyes, ears, legs, thighs, &c., though but one head. It is because a man hath liberty to consult with many heads in any business of importance; yea, if the business be urgent, and require haste, yet he hath another, his wife in his own family. In spiritual things, Christ sent forth his disciples two by two, Luke x. 1. Paul and Barnabas sent out together by the Holy Ghost, Acts xiii. 2; and when they fell out, Paul took Silas, and Barnabas took Mark, Acts xv. 39, 40. Hence a pastor and a teacher appointed to assist one another for one congregation, Rom. xii. 7, 8. In all duties, two or three have a special assistance, Mat. xviii. 20.

Secondly, In casual events. Though a man may travel often, and find no harm, meet with no fall, or having fallen, may help himself, yet sometimes a dangerous fall happeneth in which society helpeth and saveth, Luke x. 30, which is most apparent in spiritual falls, 2 Sam. xii. 1-13; 2 Chron. xix. 2. In these falls which are bodily, men sooner feel their falls, and the danger of them; but in spiritual falls sin is of a venomous nature, and like some poisons blindeth the eyes, and stupefieth the feeling; so that here a faithful Christian helper is a special mercy.

Thirdly, In natural dispositions and works. If one lie alone in old and cold age, or in cold weather, he is without heat, 1 Kings i. 1, 2. Brands of fire laid together keep heat; one alone, though never so well kindled, goeth out. In spiritual matters much more. Compare 2 Cor. i. 12, 13, with Acts xviii. 5. See also 2 Chron. xxiv. 2, 17, 18, and xxvi. 5, 16.

Fourthly, In violent assaults one much helpeth his fellow, 2 Sam. x. 9-12. In spiritual assaults it is the like case. Eve alone yielded to the tempter, who, if she had kept with her husband, and consulted with him, might have resisted the temptation, and kept her innocency.

*Reason 1.* From the Lord's appointment of mankind to live in societies, first, Of family, Gen. ii. 18, Ps. lxxviii. 6; secondly, Church, Eph. ii. 19, 22; thirdly, Commonwealth, Eph. ii. 12.

*Reason 2.* From the variety of gifts given to the sons of men; and to none all, that one may stand in need of another, and make use of one another, 1 Cor. xii. 8-11. Yea, it is so in civil gifts; no man is skilled in all occupations.

*Reason 3.* From the subordination of some gifts to others, as the bricklayer to the mason, the maker of mortar to both; whence these together much further one another's business, and so make better riddance of work, and get a better reward.

*Use 1.* To refute the popish anchorites and hermits, who think solitary life a state of perfection; but Solomon judgeth it a woeful estate.

*Use 2.* To refute such as love to be alone in all their counsels and proceedings, and are not willing to communicate with others. Thus pride of heart maketh a man of a savage nature. Wild beasts love to go alone, but tame by flocks and herds. And to teach men to affect society in all their affairs. Solomon, though full of wisdom, yet had a college of wise counsellors, 1 Kings xii. 6.

*Use 3.* To persuade also seasonably to marriage; yea, as preferring it before single life, Gen. ii. 18. Adam had no need of a wife as a remedy against incontinency, yet married.

*Use 4.* To teach men in societies to do one another the more good, else Solomon's discourse falleth. Now-a-days company doth one another much hurt.

Ver. 13. *Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and a foolish king, who will no more be admonished.*

Ver. 14. *For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor.*

Ver. 15. *I considered all the living which walk*

*under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead.*

Ver. 16. *There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

In these words, Solomon declareth the vanity and vexation of spirit that befalleth upon kings and princes, and so upon royal estates; and that from a double ground or cause: first, From the folly and wilfulness of kings. ver. 13, 14; secondly, Through the levity and inconstancy of the people, ver. 15, 16. The folly and wilfulness of kings he argueth from the meanness and baseness of that estate; and that he aggravateth by an argument *a mujori*, of a far better estate of a wise child, though poor, above a foolish king, though old, and so for age venerable; preferring the low estate of the one, above the highest estate of the other, ver. 13. And this he proveth by the effects of both their estates: for the poor wise child out of prison cometh to reign; the other, born and waxen old in his kingdom, becometh poor, ver. 14. In declaring the levity and inconstancy of the people, he noteth it as a vanity found in the people of all the nations under the sun: first, That there is no end, or stay, or rest of the people's affections to their princes and governors; secondly, That the people will wax weary of the young prince that shall come after the old king, after they have tried his government, ver. 16. And both these he proveth by his own observation of all the people living in all nations under the sun, and comparing the people's dealing with the second child that shall stand up in the old king's stead, ver. 15.

*Doct.* There is a vanity and vexation of spirit that befalleth the estate of kings and princes, partly through their own folly and wilfulness, partly through the levity and inconstancy of the people.

*Reasons* of their vanity through their own folly and wilfulness: first, From the preferment of a wise child in his worst estate above such a prince in his best estate. Childhood is despicable in any, Eccles. xi. 10; 1 Tim. iv. 12, much more in poverty, Eccles. ix. 16. Old age is honourable in any, Lev. ix. 32, much more in princes. Yet when a king, though old, is foolish and wilful, a poor wise child is better than he; yea, though the child were a captive, a

prisoner. For such a poor child or youth may, out of prison, come to reign, as Joseph, Gen. xli. 14, 40; David, 1 Sam. xviii. 23; Daniel, chap. vi. 3. Where an old king may by folly and wilfulness become poor, as Pharaoh, Exod. x. 7; Saul, 1 Sam. xxviii. 15; Jehoram, 2 Kings vi. 25, and vii. 13; Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iv. 33; Manasseh, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoniah, Zedekiah, all of them prisoners, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, and xxxvi. 4, and 2 Kings xxiii. 33, xxiv. 15, and xxv. 7. The occasion whereof is, 1. God's delight to honour the humble, and crush the proud, 1 Pet. v. 5; Job xl. 11, 12. 2. Pride is the root of wilfulness.

*Reason* of their vanity, through the levity of the people. From their aptness to wax weary of any prince or governor, 1 Sam. viii. 7; 2 Sam. xv. 12, 13; 1 Kings i. 11; and this springeth from want of attainment of their ends in their magistracies. 'There is no end of all the people,' ver. 16. Every thing resteth in the attainment of his end. The end of magistracy is set down, 1 Tim. ii. 2; this the people not attending, nor attaining, they cannot rest. Hence they are compared to waves of the sea, never still—sometimes full sea, sometimes low water, Ps. lxxv. 7; Rev. xvii. 15; Isa. lvii. 20.

*Use* 1. To teach us that royal state is no sanctuary nor preservative from folly and wilfulness. Not only wicked kings, but all have had their pangs and strains of folly: David's numbering the people, 1 Sam. xxiv. 10; adultery and murder; Solomon's love of strange wives, and toleration, yea, continuance of idolatry; Asa, his league with Benhadad, imprisonment of the prophets, and trust in physicians; Jehoshaphat, his affinity with Ahab and league with idolaters; Hezekiah, shewing his treasures to the ambassadors of Babel; Josiah, his war against Pharaoh-Necho. Yea, wilfulness found not only in Pharaoh, Exod. v. 1, 2; in Saul, 1 Sam. xx. 30–33; in Jeroboam, 1 Kings 13, 33; in Jehu, 2 Kings 9, 29, 31; but sometimes in good kings: in David, 1 Sam. xxiv. 1–4; in Asa, 1 Chron. xvi. 9, 10.

Causes hereof: first, God's hand, Ps. cvii. 40. Secondly, Satan, 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Thirdly, Great places breed great spirits; whence pride springeth that leaveneth and hardeneth the whole lump, Jer. xxii. 21. Fourthly, Old age is froward and stiff. Fifthly, Flatterers about princes lead them into it.

ways for their own ends, and stiffen them in them, Hos. vii. 3, 5; Amos vii. 10-13; 1 Kings xii. 10, 11.

A warning, first, To princes, to pray for a wise and learning heart, 1 Kings iii. 9; secondly, To people, to strive with God for their princes, Ps. lxxii. 1, 2.

*Use 2.* To refuse admonition is a great folly, even in a prince, even in an old prince, 1 Kings xii. 6, 7, 13; 2 Chron. xvi. 9, 10. More hope of a fool than of such, Prov. xxvi. 12, and xii. 1. It bringeth the commonwealth into a snare, Prov. xxix. 8. How much more foolish is this wilfulness either in meaner or younger people.

*Use 3.* To teach us the excellency of wisdom, which youth, yea, childhood and poverty, cannot debase, but it will arise to preferment: and the baseness of folly and stubbornness, which nobility and age cannot honour.

*Use 4.* To teach parents to train up their children to wisdom, and therefore to learning and godliness; and withal to break them of their wilfulness, that so they may be fit for preferment in the eyes of God and men.

*Use 5.* To reprove the inconstancy of people, and the cause thereof, their neglect of the right end of magistracy, 1 Tim. ii. 2.

*Use 6.* To wean great men from popularity: the people's favour is unstable, Job v. 35; Mat. xxi. 8, 9, with xxvii. 22, 23.

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## CHAPTER V.

*Ver. 1. Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.*

*Ver. 2. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.*

*Ver. 3. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business, and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.*

In this chapter Solomon declareth the vanity found, first, In the performance of God's worship, ver. 5-7; secondly, In marvelling and murmuring at oppressions in men of place, ver. 8; thirdly, In

riches, ver. 9-19; in declaring the vanity found, not in God's worship, but in men's manner of performance of it, lest he might seem with the profane, Mal. iii. 14, to esteem it a vain thing to serve God, he rather directeth men how to prevent such vanities, than declareth the vanities which they fall into in God's worship. His direction in these three verses is, first, In general; to take heed or look well to our ways, when we enter into holy public assemblies, ver. 5. Secondly, In particular; to draw nigh to hear. Whereof he giveth a reason, from the folly of all sacrifices without drawing near to hear, ver. 5; which is amplified by the reason thereof, taken from the evil of such a worship, and their ignorance of that evil who do so perform it, ver. 5. 2. To avoid hastiness and multitude of words before God. Whereof he giveth a twofold reason: first, From God's heavenly majesty, in comparison of earthly baseness, ver. 2; secondly, From the folly springing from multitude of words, amplified by the comparison of a dream coming from multitude of business, ver. 3. The words may fitly be opened, in opening the doctrine which ariseth from them.

*Doct.* When we come into the presence of God in holy assemblies, it is for us to take heed to our ways, that we may draw nigh to hear, and be serious and short in speech before the Lord.

*To take heed to our feet* is, by a metonymy, to take heed to our ways, as Ps. cxix. 115, and xxxix. 1. Which implieth, first, Cleansing of our feet (that is, our steps) before holy duties, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2; Ps. xxvi. 6, 12; John xiii. 10; James iv. 8. Secondly, Attention to the performance of holy duties in a holy manner, Exod. iii. 5; Joshua v. 15; Lev. x. 3.

*Be more ready to hear*, is better translated, 'Draw nigh to hear, rather than offer,' &c. Which drawing nigh to hear implieth, first, Putting away all such things as set God far off from us, James iv. 8; Ps. cxxxviii. 6; Isa. lix. 2. Secondly, Sincere desire and purpose of heart to attend and obey the whole counsel of God, Acts x. 33; else we are far off, Mat. xv. 7, 8; Ezek. xxxiii. 31. Thirdly, Mingling it with faith, that is, with faithful application to ourselves, Rom. x. 8; Heb. iv. 2.

*Reason 1.* From the folly of all sacrifices (of all other parts of God's worship) if attention to the word be neglected, text; Prov. xxviii. 9. It is an

evil before God, and evacuate the acceptance of all our oblations, 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23. And it is also mixed with vacuity and ignorance, to think we are well occupied, and spend our time well, when indeed we lose our labour, yea, return worse than we came.

*Reason of serious and short speech* : 1. From God's heavenly majesty in comparison of our earthly baseness, ver. 2 ; Prov. x. 19 ; Mat. vi. 7. His heavenly majesty, first, Knoweth all our wants when we pray, Mat. vi. 32 ; secondly, Is a spirit that is not moved with words, but spirit and life, John iv. 23, 24 ; thirdly, His own words, when he speaketh to us, are spirit and life, John vi. 63. And therefore we must not beat the air in hasty and much speech.

*Reason 2.* From the vanity and folly of long discourses, whether in prayer or preaching, ver. 3, 7 ; Prov. x. 19. As a dream cometh by much business, so a fool's voice by multitude of words, ver. 3, where blot out in the translation, *is known*.

*Use 1.* To teach us how we are to esteem holy assemblies. They are the house of God ; in old time, so was the tabernacle and temple, 1 Kings ix. 1 ; Ps. cxxxii. 5, lxxiv. 8, and lxxxiii. 12. Which were types, first, Of Christ's body, John ii. 21 ; secondly, Of the church assembly, 1 Cor. iii. 16. Now, therefore, church assemblies are the Lord's house, 1 Tim. iii. 15. Not our meeting-houses, but God's people in them, Acts vii. 48, 49 ; John iv. 21 ; 1 Tim. ii. 8.

*Use 2.* To reprove falling down to private prayer, either, first, In meeting-houses behind a pillar, in the absence of the people ; secondly, In the presence of the people, but not joining with them. All public duties should be performed, first, With one accord, Acts i. 14, ii. 46, and iv. 24 ; secondly, To public edification, 1 Cor. xiv. 26. Also to reprove Latin service, and instruction by images, which are to be seen, not heard ; likewise to reprove standing far off when we may come within hearing ; also careless and listless carriage in the congregation, standing like pillars, driving away the time with sleeping, talking, gazing about ; likewise running out of doors before all be ended. Moreover, lowness of voice in ministers, which hindereth hearing.

*Use 3.* To teach us such preparation before hearing, and attention in hearing, as may be acceptable to God and profitable to ourselves.

*Use 4.* To teach ministers, in prayer and preach-

ing, both weight of matter and shortness of word Prov. x. 19, 20, and xxix. 20.

*Obj.* But was not Christ long in prayer—a whole night? Luke vi. 12 ; and Paul in preaching? Acts xx. 7, 9.

*Ans.* First, Upon extraordinary occasions ; secondly, With as much variety of matter and fervency of spirit as multitude of words.

*Ver. 4.* *When thou vowest a vow to God, defer not to pay it ; for he hath no pleasure in fools : pay therefore that which thou hast vowed.*

*Ver. 5.* *Better it is that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.*

*Ver. 6.* *Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error : wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands ?*

*Ver. 7.* *For in the multitude of dreams and many words, there are also divers vanities : but fear thou God.*

In the three former verses Solomon instructed us to avoid in God's worship the irreverent neglect of attention in hearing, and rashness in speaking before God. In these verses he instructeth against the vanity in the delay or neglect of payment of vow. 'When thou hast vowed a vow, defer not to pay it,' whereof he giveth six reasons :—

*Reason 1.* From the folly—yea, hateful folly hateful to God—to delay payment of vow ver. 4.

*Reason 2.* *A majori*, from the betterment of not vowing, above not paying, ver. 5.

*Reason 3.* From the defilement of the whole man by the rashness of the mouth in vowing, which a man should not suffer : 'Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin,' ver. 6.

*Reason 4.* From the inexcusableness of such a sin from its not falling under that kind of sins for which sacrifices are wont to be offered : 'Neither say thou before the angel that it was an error.'

*Reason 5.* From God's anger and vengeance against such vows and such excuses, even to the destroying of the works of a man's hand, ver. 6.

*Reason 6.* From the vanity of such rash vows and speeches—yea, the variety of vanity in them, answerable to what is found in many dreams, ver. 7.

Against all which he prescribeth an antidote or preservation—to wit, the fear of God: ‘But fear thou God,’ ver. 7.

*Doct.* 1. When a man hath vowed a vow to God, he is to pay it, and that without delay, Deut. xxiii. 21-23; Ps. lxxvi. 11, and lvi. 12, ‘Thy vows are upon me;’ as an engagement or debt, which a faithful man would be careful to discharge to men, much more to God, Ps. l. 14; Nahum i. 15. For opening the point, it is to be shewn, 1. What a vow is; 2. What is a seasonable time of vowing, and whether now at all, in the days of the New Testament; 3. The reasons against delay of payment of vows.

1. What a vow is. A lawful vow, it is a promise made to God, wherein a man bindeth his soul to perform some acceptable work to God. First, A promise made to God, wherein it differeth from a prayer. In a prayer, we require something which God hath promised to us; in a vow, we promise something to God. Hence in the text the vow is said to be vowed to God, ver. 4 and 2. Secondly, A man bindeth his soul to God in them, Num. xxx. 4. Thirdly, To perform some acceptable thing to God. Unlawful things we may not vow, as the Jews did, Acts xxiii. 12, 13; nor impossible, nor unsuitable to our calling. But two sorts of things are acceptable matters of vows: first, Religious obedience to God in his commandments, Ps. cxix. 109; Gen. xxviii. 20, 21; secondly, Helps to obedience, and removal of impediments. Payment of tithes was a help to worship, and to the maintenance of it, in those days when God accepted such a maintenance for his priests, Neh. ix. 38, with x. 29, 32; Gen. xxviii. 22. So contributions, Acts iv. 37; so the vow of a Nazarite, 1 Sam. i. 11; Job xxxi. 1, was a removal of an impediment, 2 Cor. xi. 10, a prevention of dishonour to Paul’s ministry.

2. A seasonable time of vowing is, first, When we stand in need of some special favour from God; then, as we desire God might draw more nigh to us in special mercy, so it is meet we should draw more nigh to God in special duty, Gen. xxviii. 20-22; Num. xxi. 1-3. Secondly, When we have received some special mercy, Ps. cxvi. 8, 9, and lxxix. 11; Jonah i. 16. Thirdly, When we find our hearts ready to betray us to this or that evil by

occasion, we may vow against such occasions, and vow also the contrary duties, Job xxxi. 1; 2 Cor. xi. 10; which argueth vows are not unseasonable in the days of the gospel. Fourthly, When we are to enter into some new relation whereof God is the author, and the duties of the relation depend upon our vows or covenants with God, and with one another. Thus in marriage, Prov. ii. 17; Mal. ii. 14; and in church covenant, 2 Cor. viii. 5, and xi. 2.

*Reason* 1. From the folly, yea, hateful folly, folly hateful to God, to delay payment of vows, ver. 4.

*Reason* 2. From the preferment of not vowing before not paying vows, ver. 5.

*Reason* 3. From the charge lying upon us to keep our mouths, and the evil of sin redounding to our whole man by rash vowing, ver. 6, as who should say, We have sins enough, and frailties whereto we are subject otherwise; we had not need rashly to rush into more by such inconsideration.

*Reason* 4. From the vanity of the excuse of such a sin before the angel, as an error of ignorance; where by *angel* is meant the priest or messenger of the Lord, as Mal. ii. 7, before whom the excuser of his rash vow would come and offer sacrifice for his ignorance or error, Lev. iv. 27, 28; the same word here and there and oft in that chapter, as ver. 2, 13, 22, 27.

*Reason* 5. From the wrath and vengeance of God against such vows and such excuses. God will be angry at thy voice, and destroy the works of thy hands. Thus God was angry with Jacob for delay, Gen. xxxiv. 30, with xxxv. 1; thus he destroyed Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v. 2-5.

*Reason* 6. From the variety of vanities in such vows and delays, as in dreams—to wit, in both, first, Idleness and unprofitableness; secondly, Confusion; thirdly, Troublesomeness; fourthly, Contradictions; fifthly, Absurdities; sixthly, Falsehoods.

*Use* 1. To refute popish vows, as to saints, without a pattern in Scripture. See *Bell. lib. de cultu Sanctorum*, c. 9. The like evil is in vows of poverty, perpetual single life, and regular obedience; they are like the idolatrous praying priests, 2 Kings xxiii. 5; for incense was a type of prayer, Ps. xiv. 12. Vows to the devil, as in witchcraft; vows of all unlawful things; for all such vows, men that make them are to be humbled for them, and to break them, lest we draw in God to bind us to sin.

*Use 2.* To exhort to careful payment of our vows in baptism, in church covenant, in marriage, in our prayers (wherein we usually promise to God) duly, Ps. cxix. 32-34.

*Use 3.* To exhort to the fear of God, as that which preventeth all these vanities, ver. 7, which befall men in God's worship. This fear of God will help us, first, To vow in sense of our own insufficiency, either (1.) To make vows; (2.) To pay vows. Secondly, To depend on Christ for both.

*Ver. 8.* *If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.*

As in the former verses Solomon sought to prevent the vanities that are wont to be found in men's performance of God's service, so in this verse he seeks to prevent the vanity of discontentment or discouragement that is wont to arise in men's hearts from the oppressions of the poor, and the violent wrestings of justice and judgment.

The evil here noted is, oppression of the poor and the wresting of judgment and justice.

The remedy he prescribeth against the vanity that might arise in men upon beholding of it is, not to wonder.

The reason of not wondering is from the regard which the most high God, and others higher than magistrates, have of this matter: 'For he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than these.'

*Doct.* The beholding of the oppression of the poor in a country, and of the wresting of justice and judgment, should not put a man to wonder, Rev. xvii. 6, 7; 1 Pet. iv. 12.

*Obj.* The prophets of God, inspired by the Holy Ghost, have wondered at it, Isa. i. 21; yea, the Lord himself, Isa. lix. 14-16.

*Ans.* Wondering may arise from a fourfold cause. First, Ignorance of the cause, John vii. 15; secondly, Crossness to causes, or expectation from them, Isa. v. 4, 7, and lix. 16; thirdly, Strangeness or newness, Luke v. 26; Mark i. 27; fourthly, Astonishment or uncertainty what to do, Jer. iv. 9; Zech. xii. 4; Deut. xxviii. 28. The second sort of wondering is only incident to God, and that only; the

other three are commonly found amongst men, and are wont to breed in them both discontent and discouragement.

*Reason 1.* From the Lord's ordering it, so implied in the word *שמר*, *keepeth*. When he keepeth, no hurt done but as he directeth, Isa. xxvii. 3; Prov. xxix. 26; Lev. xxvi. 14-17; Isa. ix. 5; Ps. cix. 6.

*Reason 2.* From God's sovereignty over such as do oppress the poor and wrest judgment; and he will require and requite it, Ps. xii. 5; Lam. iii. 36; Job xxxiv. 18-20, 26-28; Eccles. iii. 16, 17.

*Reason 3.* From the pre-eminence and presidency of angels over high princes, Dan. iv. 17; 2 Kings xix. 35; Mat. xviii. 10.

*Use 1.* For instruction to people not to wonder at oppressions, or wrestings of justice or judgment, so as to break forth either into discontent or discouragement, Ps. xxxvii. 1, 2, 7, 8. But, instead of wondering, first inquire the truth of it, whether it be so or no, Gen. xviii. 20, 21; Joshua xxii. 16, &c., with 30, &c. Secondly, If true—1. See God's hand in all, Lam. iii. 38; Prov. xxix. 26. 2. Seek to reprove, Jer. xxii. 17, and reform, 1 Sam. xiv. 45, according to our places. 3. Either remove timely, Ps. lv. 6-11, or patiently wait upon God, Ps. xxxvii. 3-7, and suffer from man.

*Use 2.* To warn magistrates and great men to take heed to their ways. The Lord observeth, regardeth, requiteth, 2 Chron. xix. 6.

*Use 3.* For comfort to the poor oppressed. Though no man regard the poor and their just cause, yet God and his angels do.

*Ver. 9.* *Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field.*

*Ver. 10.* *He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.*

*Ver. 11.* *When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?*

*Ver. 12.* *The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.*

*Ver. 13.* *There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.*

Ver. 14. *But those riches perish by evil travail : and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand.*

Ver. 15. *As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.*

Ver. 16. *And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind ?*

Ver. 17. *All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.*

In these words the Holy Ghost setteth forth the vanity of covetousness, or the love of money, by sundry arguments. First, From the unsatiableness of it, ver. 10, amplified by the contrary sufficing and satisfying profit which the earth or field yieldeth to all sorts, even to kings, ver. 9. Secondly, From the diversion, or turning aside, of the profit of wealth to others, and reserving no more benefit to the owners than the bare sight thereof, ver. 11. Thirdly, From the distress and unquietness which abundance—1. Of meats and drinks ; 2. Of cares—yieldeth to the owner by the excess, amplified by the contrary sweet and quiet sleep and rest of the labouring servant, ver. 12. Fourthly, From the hurt redounding to the owners by wealth, ver. 13. Fifthly, From the perishing of riches by evil travail, ver. 14. Sixthly, From the penny his seed may fall into, ver. 14. Seventhly, From the necessity of leaving all behind him in death, ver. 15, 16. Eighthly, From the many crosses and vexations which befall a man in his lifetime from his wealth, ver. 17.

*Doct.* The earth yieldeth sufficient profit unto all sorts of men, from the king to the meanest servant, but not to covetousness, 1 Chron. xxvii. 26-31 ; Prov. xxvii. 23-27, and xxxi. 16 ; 2 Chron. xxvi. 10 ; Amos ii. 1. It is bread that strengthens man's heart above all other meats, Isa. iii. 1 ; it is the staff, Ps. civ. 15 ; Gen. xliii. 8. It is searcity of bread that maketh a famine, not other commodities. And even the beasts and flocks are maintained by the earth.

*Reason* of the earth's yielding profit sufficient : first, God provideth it, as meet that that which bred us should feed us ; secondly, That labour might be encouraged, and not lost, Gen. iii. 19 ; thirdly, To beat into us a sense of our mortality. As the earth bred us, so it feedeth us till we return to it.

Not so covetousness, or the love of money, or of wealth.

*Reason* 1. From the unsatiableness of covetousness, ver. 10. It is a great vanity when we covet a creature which cannot satisfy us when we have it. Hunger is satisfied with meat, thirst with drink ; but hunger and thirst after wealth is not satisfied with wealth. The love of meat and drink will make a man willing to use and spend them, but the love of money and silver will not suffer a man to spend them. A poor man's poor estate may be relieved by one wealthy man's beneficence, but the hunger of the covetous cannot be satisfied with a hundred men's estates ; a sign his heart and mind is unmeasurably poor and miserable. A man that is still hungry when he hath eaten enough, (as in the *βουλημία*), or is still thirsty when he hath drunk enough, (as in the dropsy,) physicians say, *Opus habet purgatione, non impletione* ; so is it with the covetous man. Though the covetous man may say and think he layeth up for his heirs, yet he would not have his heirs to spend it, but, like conduit-pipes, to convey it from one to another.

*Reason* 2. From the unprofitableness of abundance ; it increaseth not our comforts, but expenses, 1 Kings iv. 22, 23. Servants must be multiplied suitably, 1. To our business ; 2. To our rank. The eye is only fed with it, but neither that to satisfaction.

*Reason* 3. From the disrest and disquietness which abundance yieldeth by excess, 1. Of meats and drinks ; 2. Cares and want of sleep, ver. 12 : which cometh to pass, first, By filling the stomach, and so straitening the lungs that they cannot breathe freely ; secondly, By sending up store of fumes and vapours into the brain, which fill it with excrements, and emptieth itself in rheums and phlegms, which, by spitting, coughing, and dreams, interrupt sleep ; thirdly, By stupefying the animal spirits, which should recreate and refresh the brain ; fourthly, By heating the brain in the night with study and cares. But labour breedeth sweet sleep : 1. When he eateth little his senses close for want of spirits to quicken and open them ; 2. When a man eateth much, first, By exciting natural heat by labour ; secondly, By washing superfluous humours, and so keeping the stomach and brain clean.

*Reason* 4. From the hurt redounding to the owners

by wealth, ver. 13: hurt, 1. To the body, 1 Kings xxi. 6-8; 2. To the soul, first, Leading it into many temptations, 1 Tim. vi. 9; Ps. lxxix. 22; secondly, Choking good seed, Mat. xii. 22; thirdly, Hardening men's hearts in evil of impeniteney, Rom. ii. 4, 5.

*Reason 5.* From the perishing of riches by evil travail, ver. 14: either, first, Of a man's self, as by an ill haunt to hawks, hounds, whores, or suretyship, buildings, gaming, costly apparel; secondly, Of his household, children, servants, wasting and consuming their estate; thirdly, Of his enemies, Job i. 14-17.

*Reason 6.* From the penury incident to rich men's children, nothing in his hand: 1. No wealth; 2. No labour. First, Neither wit; secondly, Nor skill; thirdly, Nor strength to it.

*Reason 7.* From the necessity of leaving all behind a man at death, ver. 15, 16; Job i. 21; 1 Tim. vi. 7. Only laden they are with more sin, else stripped of all outward things: first, Honours, Ps. xlix. 17; secondly, Profits, Luke xii. 20; thirdly, Pleasures, Heb. xi. 25. We come into the world crying, we go out mourning and groaning. Hence all labour for wealth is for wind: first, We cannot hold and keep it; secondly, It swelleth us like empty bladders.

*Reason 8.* From the much anguish and sorrow and vexation which wealth causeth, through, first, Losses and crosses; secondly, Fears of after evils; thirdly, Darkness through want of spiritual light.

*Use 1.* To encourage to husbandry, and feeding of cattle, and all labour about the earth; it breedeth sufficient profit. The earth is a cistern to the sea also.

*Use 2.* To teach kings not to destroy the fruits of the earth. They undo themselves.

*Use 3.* To acknowledge the bounty of God in providing so fruitful a nurse for us, Acts xiv. 16, 17.

*Use 4.* To dissuade from covetousness, which is when we love riches, first, For themselves, not for their use; secondly, Are not satisfied with them; thirdly, Are not content with what the earth may produce for diet, clothing, and lodging.

*Use 5.* To teach a painful poor man thankfulness.

*Use 6.* To teach all men, even rich men, moderation of diet, and diligence of labour, Prov. xxxi. 13, 19, 27.

*Use 7.* To teach wealthy men to beware of ill haunts, Prov. vi. 26, xxi. 17, and xxiii. 21; but rather to employ their estates in some profitable matter; they will else come to an ill end.

*Use 8.* To teach parents to leave their children, first, A good covenant; secondly, Custom to labour. Any other wealth may come short to them.

Ver. 18. *Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion.*

Ver. 19. *Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God.*

Ver. 20. *For he shall not much remember the days of his life: because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.*

Solomon, having shewed in the former verses the abuse of wealth by covetousness, in these words he sheweth a contrary good use of wealth: first, In good men, ver. 18; secondly, In all men, ver. 19. In good men he saith it is comely and beautiful to eat, drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour all the days of his life, which God giveth him, ver. 18.

*Reason* hereof he giveth, first, From the condition of his estate, and of this use of it, it is his portion, ver. 18; secondly, From the quiet passing away of his time without sad remembrances of it, for he shall not much remember the days of his life; the reason whereof he giveth from God's answering his heart in comfort, ver. 20. In all men to whom God hath given wealth, it is a gift of God, 1. To have power to eat of it; 2. To take his portion; 3. To rejoice in his labour, ver. 19.

*Doct.* To eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of a man's labour, it is comely in a good man, and it is the gift of God in any man, Eccles. ii. 26, iii. 12, 13, and ii. 24.

*Reasons* to confirm it. 1. From Solomon's experience: 'Behold I have seen it, or found it,' ver. 18.

*Reason 2.* From the evil disease and vanity that lieth upon a man, when he is denied the power to make use of it, Eccles. vi. 2.

*Reason 3.* From the condition of men's estates in this world. It is their portion, ver. 18, both to good men, ver. 18, and to evil men, Ps. xvii. 14. As a portion, 1. It furnisheth us with necessaries, expediences, delights; 2. It maketh up crosses and



losses ; 3. It maketh provision for after times, yea, for another world, 1 Tim. vi. 17-19.

*Use 4.* It is the fruit, or end, or good of his labour, ver. 18.

*Use 5.* From the shortness of the days of a man's life, ver. 18. He that reserveth the use of all till old age, may die before he come to use it at all, or else be then unable to use it, 2 Sam. xix. 35.

*Reason 6.* From the joy and comfort wherein God answereth a good man's heart in enjoying the good of his labour, ver. 20. Now, to enjoy the good of it, implieth, first, The reaping of the fat and sweet of it ourselves ; secondly, To impart the good of it unto others also, Eccles. iii. 12, 13 ; Isa. lxiv. 5.

*Reason 7.* From the little thought or remembrance which such a good man takes how his time spendeth, ver. 20. For he doth not much remember the days of his life, which is an effect of the former joy ; which is as oil to the wheels, and so makes our time to pass easily. All the days of the afflicted are evil, Prov. xv. 15, and he takes sad thoughts and remembrance of the revolution of times, Job vii. 3, 4. If an evil man take as little thought and remembrance of his time, it is not comely for him ; it becometh him not, Job xxi. 13.

*Use 1.* To teach good men, yea, to encourage them, to enjoy the good of their estates. It is comely for them, Ps. xxxiii. 1 ; not so for a wicked man, Prov. xxvi. 1, and xix. 10. All the former reasons of the doctrine are as motives to the use.

*Use 2.* To teach all men, that any good which they enjoy from the creature is the gift of God ; and therefore they to look to God, to enjoy the giver as well as his gift.

*Use 3.* To teach men to give themselves to labour, else how shall they enjoy the good of their labour ?

*Use 4.* To teach us to number our life by days, ver. 18 ; Gen. xlvii. 9.

*Use 5.* To reckon our life, and all the days of them, as God's gift, ver. 18 ; Lam. iii. 22.

*Use 6.* To teach us the way to pass away our days comfortably. It is to be good, and to enjoy the good of our labours, receiving the good of our labours, doing good to others. In this way God answereth in joy our hearts, and we pass away our times without sad remembrances, ver. 20.

## CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1. *There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men :*

Ver. 2. *A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it : this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.*

In this chapter Solomon declareth the vanity, first, Of human society, or prosperity in outward things, ver. 1, 2 ; secondly, Of long life and store of children, ver. 3-6 ; thirdly, Of labour, ver. 7, 8, &c. In these two verses Solomon setteth forth the vanity of such outward good things wherewith men are most taken—to wit, riches, wealth, honour ; and these amplified, 1. By their abundance even unto satiety, so that a man wanteth nothing of all that he desireth ; 2. By the evil God inflicteth upon it : God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it ; 3. By the adjuncts of this estate, fourfold : first, It is an evil ; secondly, It is common amongst men under the sun, ver. 1 ; thirdly, It is a vanity ; fourthly, It is an evil disease, ver. 2. Riches, wealth, and honour are expressed by God himself in the same terms, 2 Chron. i. 11. Riches differ from wealth ; riches expressing revenues of the field, or cattle, which are tithable ; for it is a word in the Hebrew which differeth in a prick only from tenths or tithes. Wealth, in the original, is such treasure of silver, gold, jewels, and household stuff which are not tithable. God giveth him not power to eat thereof, a metaphor and a synecdoche in eating, put for enjoying the sweetness of them ; one kind of enjoying put for all. For honour cannot properly be eaten, but the sweet of them may be enjoyed.

*Doct. 1.* It is a vanity and an evil, even an evil disease, an evil disease common amongst men everywhere, that a man receiveth from God riches and honour of all sorts, even to the satisfaction of his soul, and yet God giveth him not power to enjoy the good of it, but leaveth it to a stranger.

*Reason 1.* From the unlawful getting of riches or honour by oppression, deceit, ambition, or the like, Prov. xxviii. 8, and xiii. 22 ; Job. xxvii. 13, 16, 17.

*Reason 2.* From the satisfaction of their hearts in

it ; which acquiescency in the creature is an idolatry which the Lord will curse, Luke xii. 19, 20.

*Reason 3.* From want of prayer to God, for a comfortable use of the blessings we do enjoy, James iv. 3.

*Reason 4.* From the abuse of the creatures upon our lusts, James iv. 3 ; Job xx. 22.

God taketh away from a man the power to enjoy the sweet and good of it many ways : as, first, By sickness of body, Job xxi. 25 ; secondly, By scruple of conscience, as Acts x. 13, 14 ; thirdly, By inordinate affection to some trifle, for want of which all is less comfortable, Esther v. 11–13 ; fourthly, By covetousness, Eccles. iv. 8 ; fifthly, By some stain of folly in a great person, which blasteth all his honour, Eccles. x. 1.

*Use 1.* To teach us that all riches, wealth, and honour, and all the enjoyments of that good and sweet thereof, are from the Lord, 1 Chron. xxix. 12.

*Use 2.* To ask of him therefore what we want, either of these things or of the good of them.

*Use 3.* To remove these evils out of God's sight, for which he is wont to deny men the good of the gifts we do enjoy.

*Use 4.* To bless the Lord, who giveth us any good things, and power to enjoy the good and sweet of them.

*Ver. 3.* *If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial ; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he.*

*Ver. 4.* *For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness.*

*Ver. 5.* *Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known anything : this hath more rest than the other.*

*Ver. 6.* *Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good : do not all go to one place ?*

In these verses Solomon declareth the vanity of two other earthly comforts : 1. Store of children ; 2. Long life, which may be accompanied and clogged with great vanity, in case two other benefits be wanting : first, The soul to enjoy good ; secondly, The body to enjoy burial ; which misery and vanity

he setteth forth by a comparison with an abortive, *a pari et a minore*, equal in five respects : 1. Of coming into the world with vanity, ver. 4. 2. Of seeing no good, ver. 6. 3. Of departing in darkness and obscurity, ver. 4. 4. Of oblivion of both, ver. 4. 5. Of going both to one place, ver. 6. The vanity of the abortive. Less in respect, first, He hath not seen the sun ; secondly, He hath not known anything to grieve him ; thirdly, He hath more rest than the other, ver. 5.

*Doct. 1.* An old father of many children and many years, if his soul want goodness and his body burial, an abortive, or untimely birth, is as good, yea, better than he. As good in respect, 1. Of their entrance into the world ; they both came in with vanity, that is, to no end. Not simply and altogether, for God hath wise and good ends of sending them both into the world, but in regard of themselves and other men. 2. Of their seeing no good in lifetime, ver. 6. 3. Of their departure out of the world ; they both depart in darkness : first, Of obscurity ; secondly, Of misery. 4. They both are covered with darkness of oblivion, yea, sometime the name of the wicked shall rot when the other is not blemished, Prov. x. 7. 5. Of the same place whereto they both go—to the earth from whence they came, and the wicked man to a worse place, Acts i. 25. The abortive better in respect, first, He never saw the sun, so he never saw outward good things, which might trouble him to lose ; secondly, He never knew anything good or evil, so that his reckoning is more easy and his present grief less ; thirdly, He enjoyeth more rest from evils both in this and in the other world, ver. 5.

*Reason 1.* From the overpoising vanity of those two wants—first, Of burial ; secondly, Of soul's want of goodness—to extinguish the comforts of, 1. Store of children ; 2. Long life. Want of burial, first, Leaveth the body as dung to rot and stink upon the face of the earth, a thing, 1. Dishonourable to the dead ; 2. Loathsome to the living, Ps. lxxxiii. 10 ; 2 Kings ix. 37, 38 ; Jer. xxi. 18, 19. Secondly, Leaveth the body without pledge of resurrection ; the body buried is corn sown, 1 Cor. xv. 36. The soul's want of goodness, 1. Is as a dead carcass stinking above ground, Ps. xiv. 3. 2. Leaveth it to more putrefaction by longer lying above ground,

yea, the more inexcusable in impenitency, Rev. ii. 21. 3. Procureth a greater damnation for living so long with so many children, and for want of goodness doth neither good to himself nor them.

*Use 1.* To take off men from blessing themselves in store of children and long life. Rehoboam had store of children—sons, twenty-eight; daughters, sixty—yet his soul empty of goodness, 2 Chron. xi. 21, with xii. 14. Ahab had seventy sons, 2 Kings x. 1, yet they all died a violent death, ver. 6, 7; and their father's blood dogs did eat, 1 Kings xxii. 38. And though his carcase found burial, yet not so Jezebel's, 2 Kings ix. 34-37.

*Use 2.* To moderate the grief of such as want children or have abortives, so their souls want not goodness, nor their bodies burial, they are better than these in the text.

*Use 3.* To look at abortion as a vanity and misery to the creature, and so at want of burial. It is a stoical apathy to despise want of burial, *Facilis jacitura sepulchri: Cælo tegitur, qui non habet urnam.* Solomon's porch and Venus' porch are not of equal dimensions. And if abortion be a vanity and misery, then avoid such sins as make us like them: as, first, Malignancy against God's people, joined with incorrigibleness, Ps. lviii. 8; secondly, Harsh and unreverent insurrection against well-deserving magistrates, Num. xii. 1, 2, 12.

*Use 4.* To exhort to furnish the soul with goodness, which will make a blessing of life, long or short, children many or few, burial or no burial, Isa. lxxv. 20; Ps. lxxix. 2. A woman fearing God is better than a woman bearing the best child, Luke xi. 27, 28.

Ver. 7. *All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.*

Ver. 8. *For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living?*

Ver. 9. *Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.*

In these verses Solomon discovereth to us the vanity of labour, which he setteth forth by four arguments. First, From the wearisomeness of it, implied in the word עמל, which is *labour—cum defatigatione et molestia.* Secondly, From the end of

it, for the mouth. Thirdly, From the emptiness or defect of it, in that the soul is not satisfied by it, ver. 7; which is amplified by a distribution of the subject-person so labouring, whether he be wise or foolish, the one hath no more by his labour than the other. Yea, the poor, who is more laborious and industrious than other men; yea, the discreet and prudent poor, who knoweth how to converse and carry himself amongst men, he hath no more by his labour but to fill his mouth, yet not to fill his desire or soul, ver. 8. Fourthly, From the wandering of the desire, (which springeth from the soul's not being filled.) This is amplified by an argument *a majori*, that it is better to enjoy the sight of the eyes—that is, to enjoy and to be content with the present estate—than to be carried on with such a walking soul or wandering desire. In regard of all which evils he counteth labour itself, with these concomitants, to be vanity and vexation of spirit, ver. 9.

*Doct.* All the labour that the sons of men take in the estate of corrupt nature is a grievous or vexatious vanity, Gen. iii. 17, 19. And though, by Christ and his grace, the bitterness and sting of that vanity is removed, (the curse being taken away, Gal. iii. 13,) yet the cross still remaineth; hence Jacob's description of his life in all the years of it, and in all the days of those years, Gen. xlvii. 9, 10; Paul, 2 Cor. xi. 27.

*Reason 1.* From the wearisomeness of the labour, amplified in the word עמל, which is translated *wearisomeness*, Job vii. 3—to wit, 1. Fainting the body; 2. Afflicting the mind with care and grief.

*Reason 2.* From the end of it; it is for the month. The husbandman labours in the earth, the mariner in the sea, the shepherd in the field, the carpenter in the wood, the tradesman in his shop, the scholar in his book; as they are natural men, they all labour for the mouth, Prov. xvi. 26.

*Obj.* How can this stand, seeing much labour is for the back, for apparel, or for lodging? Mat. vi. 25.

*Ans.* First, The mouth may be put for the whole body, as sometimes bread is put for all maintenance, as well of back as belly, Gen. iii. 19; Mat. vi. 11.

Secondly, It is true in proper speech, taking the mouth for the chief and supreme end of labour, to which all the rest must give place in case of necessity. A man will sell his lodging and clothing,

and all he hath, for his mouth, Gen. xlvii. 15-19 ; and it is a great vanity that the divine spirit of a man should labour only for sensual things and transitory.

*Reason 3.* From the emptiness of the soul or appetite after all this labour. The mouth is a narrow portal, not above two or three inches square, and the stomach not above a hand-breadth square—the whole man not above five feet long ; and yet, when a man hath laboured to fill all these, and provided him of store for many years, yet his mind is not satisfied, but his inordinate desire after the means of his maintenance, like a dropsy-thirst, is never filled. And thus fareth it with the learned scholar, the rich churl, the industrious and prudent poor man. These vanities fall alike to them all ; how much less is the immortal soul filled !

*Reason 4.* From the wanderingness of the unsatisfied desire, which, like the bee, runneth from flower to flower, and sucketh honey and wax till it be laden, and yet still laboureth for more, till sometimes it be stockened in its hive through abundance of honey.

*Better is the sight of the eyes,* that is, better is what you see before you, be it less or more, than the wandering of the desire : as the good householder saith to his guest, Much good may it do to you what you see before you.

*Use 1.* To remind us of the greatness of our fall in Adam, whence so much bitterness in labour and sin, for a little sweetness of the fruit of a tree, and that upon us and on all our posterity.

*Use 2.* To beware of such sinful labours as increase these wearisome vanities. If honest labour be so grievous and vain, how much more sinful labours ! Take heed of labour to undermine and supplant well-deserving men, Prov. iv. 16 ; Ps. vii. 14. Darius was better employed, Dan. vi. 14 ; 1 Thes. iv. 11.

*Use 3.* To teach us to labour for that bread which perisheth not, but feedeth and satisfieth the soul to eternity, John vi. 26, 27 ; Rev. ii. 3 ; Rom. xvi. 12 ; Phil. iv. 3 ; 1 Cor. xv. 10, 58.

*Use 4.* To teach the poor that discretion in him is observed by God and wisest princes, when he knoweth how to walk before the living.

*Use 5.* To wean us from wandering desires, and to learn us satisfaction and contentment in our

present estate, that is, with what we see before us, Phil. iv. 11 ; 1 Tim. vi. 6.

*Use 6.* To raise up the country unto thankfulness to God, that supplieth us comfortably with that which men most labour for. We need not sell our clothes for bread.

Ver. 10. *That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man : neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.*

Ver. 11. *Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better ?*

Ver. 12. *For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow ? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun ?*

*That which, it is quicquid fuerit, as Junius ; or as Broughton, quisquis fuerit ; or as the words and sense fitly run, whatsoever he, that is, any one is, quicquid quis fuerit, it was named already (or formerly of old) and it is known to be Adam, &c.*

Solomon summeth up the vanity of man, whosever or whatsoever he be ; he sheweth what his estate is, first, By creation : 1. He is *Adam*, a piece of red earth, base and of the earth, argued by his notation ; 2. Impotent to his Maker ; he cannot contend with him that is mightier than he, ver. 10. Secondly, By his present condition after the fall : 1. All the accessions that come upon him, learning or knowledge, honour, wealth, pleasure, long life, store of children, labour, they all increase his vanity. What is he the better, to wit, for them all ? ver. 11. 2. He is ignorant, first, Of what is good for him in this life, which is amplified by the simile of a shadow ; secondly, Of future things : who shall tell him what shall be after him ? ver. 12.

*Doct.* Whatsoever the man be, it is well known, as his name is, so is he ; *Adam*, a lump of clay ; and whatsoever befalleth him in this life, in his natural estate, he is never the better for it, Gen. i. 26, 27, and ii. 7 ; Eccles. xii. 7. Clay, and so, 1. Subject to the hand of the potter, of necessity, Jer. xviii. 6 ; 2. Base, Ps. xlix. 2, and lxii. 9 ; 3. Brittle, first, In soul mutable, Job iv. 18, 19 ; secondly, In body easily subject to mortality, of itself, Job iv. 19. That that which befalleth him in this life, maketh

him not the better, is argued from the vanity of all, Eccles. i. 2.

*Reason 1.* From his utter insufficiency and inability to contend with his Maker, ver. 10. An earthen pot cannot contend with a rock, Mat. xxi. 44; Isa. xlv. 9; Rom. ix. 20, 21; Job ix. 3, 4; where be two reasons of it: the first, From God's wisdom; the second, From his power.

*Reason 2.* From the increase of vanity upon man by all the accessions of this life, by gifts, 1. Of the mind, Isa. xlvii. 10; Jude 4; 2. Of the body, Ezek. xvi. 15; implied, 3. Of outward estate, Jer. xxii. 21; Rev. iii. 17; Prov. i. 32; Ezek. xxviii. 4; 2 Chron. xxvi. 16; which springeth, first, From our corrupt nature, which, as a fusty vessel, corrupteth all that is put into it; secondly, From the curse of God upon the creatures by the fall, Gen. iii. 17.

*Reason 3.* From the ignorance and unskilfulness of men, 1. To discern what is good for them in this momentary life, Job xi. 12. We look at those things which are best for us, which are temporary, bodily, and present; whereas our souls find no good in such—as a dropsy-man chooseth drink, which is most hurtful for him. We know not how to make a good use of them so far as they might lead us, Deut. xxix. 4. 2. To foresee or discern future things, Eccles. viii. 7.

*Use 1.* To humble the pride of man. Earthly man, whatsoever he be, he is known of old to be *Adam*; and that which more humbleth him is, that he is not the better for all that befalleth him in this life, nor doth he know what is good for him in this life, nor how to make use of it.

*Use 2.* To teach men not to contend with their Maker. It is hard to dash earthen pitchers against stone walls. Therefore to forbear pleadings and murmurings—1. Against God's purpose, Rom. ix. 20, 21; 2. Against his providence, Jer. xii. 1—we must submit patiently under God's hands, Ps. xxxix. 9; we must obediently follow his calling, Rev. xiv. 4.

*Use 3.* To shew us our life as in a glass. It is as a shadow—to wit, 1. Without substance—rather a death than a life, 1 Tim. v. 6; 2. Seeming greater when life is most remote; 3. Easily or speedily passing away, and that when it is at greatest.

*Use 4.* For thankfulness to God, that Christ

would take such a base estate upon him as the estate of earthly man. That so many sons of Adam meet together, yet some good agreement; else, were it not for God's special guidance and blessing, vanity put to vanity would but increase vanity, Ps. xxxix. 5, with lxii. 9. The Netherlanders' motto a wholesome advertisement, resembling themselves to a company of earthen pitchers floating in the sea, with this word, *Si collidimur frangimur*.

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## CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1. *A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.*

Solomon having spoken of the vanity of sundry conditions of the creature, considered in themselves, in this he speaketh of their vanity compared one with another, wherein also he intimateth the vanity of men's judgments and imagination touching these things, as esteeming the better to be worse, and the worse to be better. In this verse he declareth two things to be better than other two, which are commonly reputed to be worse—as, first, A good name to be better than a good ointment; secondly, The day of death to be better than the birthday.

The words themselves are a proverbial doctrine: 'A good name is better than a good ointment;' yet an ointment is reckoned amongst precious riches and treasures, Isa. xxxix. 2; but a good name is preferred before it, Prov. xxii. 1.

A good ointment, first, Is fragrant, John xii. 3; secondly, Shining, and making the face to shine, Ps. civ. 15; thirdly, Sinketh into the bones, and supplieth and softeneth the dried sinews and muscles, that it maketh a man more fit for race, for wrestling, or any other bodily exercise, Ps. cix. 18; fourthly, Is healing, Luke x. 34; fifthly, Preserveth even after death by embalming, Luke xxiii. 56.

In all these properties, qualities, and effects, a good name excelleth a good ointment, which may be as so many reasons of the point. A good name, first, Is more fragrant, the one filling the house, John xii. 3, the other town and country, John iii. 26; Rom. i. 8. Secondly, Putteth a shining lustre upon the countenance, Eccles. viii. 1. Wisdom, which

is a matter of reputation, Eccles. x. 1, maketh the face to shine, &c. Thirdly, It sinketh into the bones, Prov. xv. 30; yea, it fitteth to any public employment, in ministry, 1 Tim. iii. 7, or magistracy, Deut. i. 13. Fourthly, Healeth the venom of slanders and backbitings. Fifthly, Keepeth us alive after death, Prov. x. 7.

*Obj.* How can the ninth commandment be preferred before the eighth?

*Ans.* A good name is the honour of a man's person, and so belongeth to the fifth commandment.

*Use 1.* To reprove the vanity and folly of such, who, to get wealth and treasure, care not how they prostitute their good name. It was a sordid speech of Vespasian, *Dulcis odor lucri ex re qualibet.*

*Use 2.* To reprove the blemishing and blasting of any man's good name, which duly belongeth to him. It is a greater sin than to steal the best goods he hath, Prov. xxii. 1. A tradesman's credit is oft more worth than his estate.

*Use 3.* To exhort to a conscionable care of getting and keeping a good name. It is not ambition nor vainglory when a man seeketh it by good means for good ends, and affecteth it no further, nor accepteth it, but as is due to him. Means of a good name: 1. Faith, Heb. xi. 2; 2. Fruits of faith, first, Sanctifying of God's name, 1 Sam. ii. 30; secondly, Sparing the names of our brethren, Mat. vii. 1, 2; thirdly, Humility, Prov. xxii. 4; Luke xiv. 11; fourthly, Worthy acts for public service, 1 Sam. xviii. 7; Mat. xxvi. 13; 2 Chron. xxiv. 16; 1 Pet. iii. 16. Hence sweet odours at funerals, as a monument of a sweet smelling report, 2 Chron. xvi. 14. On the contrary, sin staineth a good name, Prov. x. 7; 1 Kings xv. 30; Mat. x. 4; Gen. xi. 4, 9. Absalom's pillar, 2 Sam. xviii. 18, was *Columna culumnie*; or as Lot's wife's pillar of salt, seasoning others, but shaming ourselves. It is not fair faces, buildings, clothes, or estates that can procure or preserve a good name.

*Obj.* 1. Christ excelled in all virtues and duties, yet he lay under an ill name, as a glutton and wine-bibber, a deceiver, an enemy to Cæsar.

*Ans.* He bore our sins, and so our reproaches, as a punishment due to our sins. 2. It was amongst evil men, as his profession was also evil spoken of amongst them, Acts xxviii. 22. 3. At length he

overwrestled it, and got a great name, Phil. ii. 9.

*Obj.* 2. But it is a curse to a minister to be generally well spoken of, Luke vi. 22, 26. John Baptist is said to have a devil, Mat. xi. 18.

*Ans.* First, Ministers that are faithful have special cause to provoke wicked men, where their name chiefly suffereth, 1 Kings xxii. 8, and xviii. 17, else wisdom is justified of her children, Mat. xi. 19; secondly, Ministers at length overwrestle it, Mat. xxiii. 29, 30.

*Obj.* 3. But even private Christians, as truly godly, are traduced.

*Ans.* First, Sometime they neglect their life of faith, 2 Sam. xii. 12, 13; secondly, God prevents sin in them by false reports; thirdly, It is but at the hands of wicked men, Acts xxviii. 22, and xxiv. 25; fourthly, If it be at the hands of brethren, it is through their ignorance, emulation, and rashness, which God at length will overwrestle, Job xlii. 7. Otherwise God hideth the names of his children in the secret of his tabernacle from the strife of tongues, Ps. xxxi. 20. The words are a proverbial doctrine.

*Doct.* 2. The day of death is better than the birth-day. This is not the speech, first, Of Job in misery, Job iii. 3; secondly, Nor of Jeremiah in passion, Jer. xx. 14; but of Solomon in his repentance. This Solomon speaketh not only of some extraordinary kinds of death which have been of more public service—as the death of Christ, John xii. 32; of Samson, Judges xvi. 30; of the martyrs, whose blood is, first, The glory of God, John xxi. 19; secondly, The seed of the Church—but indefinitely and generally of the death of all or any. Better to the godly, in regard, first, Of sin, which shall then be wholly subdued, Rom. vi. 7; 1 Cor. xv. 26. If sin continued after death, death were not the last enemy. But in birth we are born in sin, Ps. li. 5; children of wrath Eph. ii. 3. Yea, new birth leaveth much corruptor still in us; we are born in sin, but we die in the Lord, Rev. xiv. 13; 1 Thes. iv. 14. Secondly, O misery, which attendeth birth, Job xiv. 1, and v. 7. But death is a haven of rest after a sea of troublesome agitation and misery, Job iii. 13, 14, 21, 22; Rev. xiv. 13. Thirdly, Of grace, which will then be perfected, Heb. xii. 23; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; Jude 24; Eph. v. 27. Death is accounted an enemy to nature, but

is a friend to grace ; we are born unclean, Job xxv. 4 ; John iii. 6, but we die perfect. Fourthly, Of glory. Birth is the seed-time of corruption, Gal. vi. 8 ; death is the seed-time of incorruption and glory, 1 Cor. xv. 36, 42-44. Birth putteth us into the hands of midwives and other weak women ; death into the hands of the glorious and mighty angels, Luke xvi. 22. Birth bringeth us forth into a valley of tears ; death into our Master's joy, Mat. xxv. 21. Birth into an estate of absence from the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 6 ; death bringeth us into his presence, 1 Thes. iv. 17 ; 1 John iii. 2. Birth bringeth us to labour, Job. v. 7 ; death to rest, Rev. xiv. 13, even Sabbath rest. Birth bringeth us into a larger and fairer world than our mother's womb ; but death into a larger and fairer than this. The starry roof of this world is but the pavement of that. Better to the wicked, in regard, first, Of others, Prov. xi. 10 ; secondly, Of themselves, though it had been good for them not be born, Mat. xxvi. 24 ; yet being born, the sooner dead, 1. The less sin ; 2. The less punishment.

*Quest.* May the wicked then do well to hasten their own deaths ?

*Ans.* By no means ; for self-murder is worse than murder of another. And besides, so the wicked cutteth himself off from means and hopes of conversion.

*Use 1.* Against purgatory to the godly after death. For then death setteth them into a worse condition than ever their birth did ; for the pains of purgatory, as papists describe them, differ not from the pains of hell in measure of torment, but duration only. And what use can there be of purgatory, when no sin is left in death to be purged after ?

*Use 2.* To exhort to such a life as may make our death comfortable. Means : first, Regeneration, new birth, John xi. 26 ; Phil. i. 21 ; secondly, Faithful and fruitful course of life, 2 Tim. iv. 6-8.

*Use 3.* To comfort the godly against death, by consideration of all the former benefits of death. Samson's riddle is now Solomon's paradox ; out of the eater, death, which devoureth all, cometh meat and sweetness.

*Obj. 1.* But in death I lose all my dear friends.

*Ans.* First, If thou hast lived any long time,

most of thy dearest friends are gone before thee ; secondly, Thou shalt change these here for better friends there ; our best friends love us not so dearly as every one there ; thirdly, Thy good friends will not be long after thee.

*Obj. 2.* But what shall I do with my poor children, and young ?

*Ans.* Leave them with God, Jer. xlix. 11.

*Obj. 3.* But there is bitterness and pangs in death.

*Ans.* First, So there is in birth ; secondly, After-comforts swallow up all griefs, John xvi. 21.

*Use 4.* To moderate the mourning of the living for their dying friends. You rejoiced in their worse day, their birthday, why not much more in their better day ? 2 Sam. xii. 19, 20. Pharaoh and Herod solemnised their birthdays, Gen. xl. 20 ; Mark vi. 21 ; why should not Christians rejoice in the departure of their Christian friends ? The days of the martyrs' execution were called *Natalitia*. It is true, we may mourn for loss of public good instruments to family, church, and commonwealth, and judge ourselves for such sins as provoke the Lord to remove them ; but yet it is best for them that they are gone, and best for the church what God doth. The death of Joseph and Josiah turned to the best good of Israel ; the bondage of Egypt wrought for Israel a more glorious deliverance ; and the captivity of Babylon, which brake in upon the death of Josiah, instead of a dungeon, proved a wine-cellar, Cant. ii. 4.

*Ver. 2.* *It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.*

As in the former verse Solomon preferred two things that seem less desirable, above other two that seem more desirable—a good name above a good ointment, and the day of death above the birthday ; so here he preferreth a third thing, that may seem less desirable, before another, which to men doth commonly seem to be much more desirable. The house of feasting is commonly preferred amongst men, as more desirable to be gone unto, above the house of mourning ; but here the day of mourning, even the greatest mourning, mourning for the dead, is preferred before the house of feasting. Better it is, saith he, to go to the house of mourning

than to the house of feasting; whereof he giveth two reasons: first, From the property of the house of mourning, to wit, for the dead. It is the end of all men. Secondly, From the good use which the living will seriously make of this house of mourning, and of the cause of mourning which he there beholdeth—the death of some friend or neighbour. The living will lay it to his heart.

*Doct.* 1. It is better, or a more desirable good thing, to go to a house of mourning for the dead, than to a house of feasting for the solace of the living. Of feasts there be three sorts: 1. Civil feasts, where a fourfold solace—first, Eating the fat and drinking the sweet; secondly, Loving and neighbourly company; thirdly, Pleasant discourse, and sometimes music; fourthly, Increase of mutual neighbourly love. 2. Profane or riotous, where the former comforts are abused and perverted, first, By excess in eating and drinking to gluttony and drunkenness; secondly, The company swaggering and debauched ruffians, swearing and roaring boys; thirdly, Instead of pleasant discourses, ribaldry, wanton songs and dances, abusing of the name of God or man; fourthly, Fallings out and quarrellings, or else linking in conspiracy to do some mischief. 3. Holy feasts, where, first, God's institution or special mercies invite to thankfulness, and to eat and drink as before God, Exod. xviii. 12; secondly, Christian company; thirdly, Holy conference, Luke xiv. 1–8, and so to the end; fourthly, Increase of childlike love to God, and brotherly love one to another. Of this last sort of feasts, the comparison is not put; for God's ordinances are more edifying than his providences. Nor is it to civil, especially to godly men; but of the second sort of feasts, riotous. For to honest and good men, it is a house of mourning to be in such a house of feasting, Ps. cxx. 5. But here he speaketh of such a house of feasting as is contrary to the house of mourning.

*Reason* 1. From the nature of the occasion of that mourning, it being the death of some or other desirable person in the family—that death is the end of all men. If the person dead were not desirable, there is little or no mourning for him, 2 Chron. xxi. 19, 20. But if there be mourning, all useful men will see their own ends in his, which is very whole-

some to our spirits, Deut. xxxii. 29; Lam. i. 9. In feasting, men are apt to put the evil day far from them, Isa. lvi. 12; Amos vi. 3–6.

Secondly, In the house of mourning we shall be occasioned to take to heart what we see; yea, to lay it as a plaster to our heart, (text.) Not so readily in a house of feasting.

*Obj.* But doth not the house of feasting offer to our hearts many serious and savoury meditations? Doth it not set before us, first, A spectacle of God's bounty, leading to thankfulness, Ps. cxlv. 16, and repentance, Rom. ii. 4; secondly, The variety of God's goodness dispersed in the several creatures, Acts xiv. 17; thirdly, The wisdom of God's providence, preparing and gathering the meat and company from sundry quarters of the world, Ps. cxlv. 15; fourthly, The large extent of Christian liberty purchased by the blood of Christ, 1 Cor. x. 27; fifthly, The fatness and sweetness of spiritual and heavenly food, *a minori*, Luke xiv. 15; sixthly, A spur to enlargement of fruitfulness after a feast; we expect our horses after well meating should travel better.

*Ans.* It is true, a feast setteth before us many spiritual advantages; but yet, first, A man's spirit disposed to cheerfulness is more exposed to lightness; secondly, Sad objects make deeper impression upon our affections; thirdly, The company at a funeral are not so apt to draw our minds away by cheerful discourse, as at a feast.

*Use* 1. To reprove funeral feasts; for it maketh the house of mourning and feasting all one.

*Use* 2. To teach us the estate of our nature. God seeth it better for us to meet with sad and mournful occurrences than cheerful.

*Use* 3. To teach us so to lay to heart the death of others, that it may be better to us than the best meal's meat, better than a feast. If thou art a living man, lay sad objects to heart, especially this of death. More distinctly lay to heart, first, Death itself; secondly, The causes of it; thirdly, The effects of it; fourthly, The manner of it; fifthly, The subject of it.

In death itself see a spectacle of thine own mortality, Joshua xxiii. 14; 1 Kings ii. 2; wait therefore for a change, Job xiv. 14.

In the causes of it. First, Moral or deserving;



look at sin. Gen. ii. 17; Rom. v. 12, especially original sin. Learn to mortify that, kill that, which else will kill us soul and body. Secondly, Natural diseases; see the evil of corrupt nature and life, Rom. vi. 23. Thirdly, Violent: 1. From magistrates; first, Justly, learn to fear such wickedness, Deut. xvii. 13; secondly, Unjustly, learn constancy to the death, Rev. ii. 10. 2. From thieves and robbers; and then learn, (1.) To walk regularly with God, who else may and will deliver into such hands, Ezek. xxi. 31; (2.) If the man slain were godly, learn to avoid the misconstructions which are wont to be made of it, Prov. xxv. 26. 3. From self; either through, (1.) Distress, as Saul; (2.) Disgrace, as Ahithophel; (3.) Despair, as Judas. Hence learn patience in affliction, with faith to prevent all such evil.

In the manner of it. First, Some die. 1. Suddenly, Job xxi. 13, 23, 24; hence learn, first, Preparation for sudden changes; secondly, Submission to reproofs, Prov. xxix. 1. 2. Lingeringly, Job xxi. 25; hence learn not patience only, but long-suffering. Secondly, Some die distracted. Learn hence, 1. To commit our senses and understanding to God; 2. Settle peace of conscience, which will keep our minds in Christ, when not in our senses, Phil. iv. 7.

In the subject. 1. Some die in sin, carnal persons; and they die, first, Either as stones, 1 Sam. xxv. 37, 38; hence learn weanedness from worldliness, which stupefieth the heart. Secondly, Or presuming, Mat. vii. 22; hence learn to build on a rock, Mat. vii. 24-27. Thirdly, Or despairing, as Judas; hence learn to beware of sins against conscience. 2. Others die in Christ; and that, first, Either troubled in mind, conflicting with desertions, Mat. xxvii. 46; hence learn to live by faith against sense, Job xii. 15; Luke xxiii. 46. Secondly, Or uncomfortably:<sup>1</sup> 1. Expressing their joy and confidence, 2 Tim. iv. 6-8; 2. Instructing and exhorting others, Gen. xlix; hence learn, first, To live uprightly and justly, Ps. xxxvii. 37; secondly, Boldness in Christ against death, Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Ver. 3. *Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.*

<sup>1</sup> Query, 'comfortably'?—Ed.

Ver. 4. *The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.*

Ver. 5. *It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.*

Ver. 6. *For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.*

In verse 2 Solomon had preferred going to the house of mourning above going to the house of mirth, whereof he gave two reasons before; the first taken from the condition of the house of mourning: it is the end of all men. The second from the spiritual improvement which living men will make of it: 'The living will lay it to heart,' ver. 2. Now in this verse he giveth another reason of it. 3. From the pre-eminence of sorrow above laughter: 'Sorrow is better than laughter.' And this he proveth, first, From the benefit of a sad countenance: 'By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better,' ver. 3. Secondly, From the pre-eminence of such men, whose hearts are in the house of mourning, above those whose hearts are in the house of mirth: 'The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, the hearts of fools in the house of mirth,' ver. 4. Thirdly, From the pre-eminence of hearing the rebuke of the wise, which causeth sorrow, above hearing the song of fools, ver. 5; the vanity whereof is amplified by a comparison, ver. 6. צַד, here translated *sorrow*, cometh of a root which signifieth properly to provoke, as Deut. xxxii. 19. Now, because a man may be provoked either to anger or to grief, therefore this word is sometimes translated *anger*, Eccles. vii. 9; sometimes *grief* or *sorrow*, as Eccles. xi. 10; Ps. cxii. 10; and here.

*Doct.* Sorrow is better than light mirth, ver. 3. Laughter expresseth light or frolic mirth.

For right understanding this point, consider these points: First, Sorrow when God calleth for mirth, and joy and mirth and laughter when God calleth for sorrow and mourning, are both alike odious to God, Deut. xxviii. 47, 48; Gen. iv. 6; Isa. xxii. 12-14; Jer. xlvi. 27. Secondly, Godly sorrow and mourning, and spiritual joy and rejoicing, are both alike acceptable to God and profitable to a man, 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11; Neh. viii. 10. Thirdly, Sorrow for sin, and upon rebukes for sin, is better than frolic joy and mirth in vain company, Eccles. vii. 5. Fourthly, Sorrow for outward affliction is better

than light mirth for slight occasions. These two latter hold forth Solomon's meaning, and are the sense of the doctrine, Heb. xi. 25 ; Job xxxvi. 21.

*Reason 1.* From the benefit of a sad countenance. As it springeth from a heart seriously affected, so it stirreth up serious affections, meditations, and conferences in the hearts of others. A merry countenance is apt to stir up to loose and dissolute, vain and frothy meditations, affections, conferences.

*Reason 2.* From the condition of the house of mourning ; it is a suitable object to the heart of a wise man : his heart is there. Sad objects to the heart are as ballast to the ship, making it to go steady ; whereas the house of mirth is a suitable object to the heart of fools, ver. 4.

*Reason 3.* From the pre-eminence or betterment of hearing the rebuke of the wise, which causeth sorrow, than the song of fools, which causeth light mirth, ver. 5 ; which may appear, 1. From the great benefit of wise reproofs. They are as, first, Pricks to let out corruption, Acts ii. 37 ; secondly, Goads to stir up to duty, Eccles. xii. 11 ; thirdly, Nails to drive in and fasten good counsel, Eccles. xii. 11 ; fourthly, Balm to heal sores, Ps. cxli. 5. 2. From the vanity of fools' laughter and light mirth. It is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, ver. 6 ; not like the fire of thorns under a pot, which is soon kindled and fair blazed, but like the noise, which first is no good melody. Secondly, Spends much fuel, as fools' mirth much time. Thirdly, Soon decayeth and dampeth, and leaveth both meat in the pot raw, and bystanders not thoroughly warmed, Ps. cxviii. 12, and lviii. 9. So doth the mirth of fools, Prov. xv. 13.

*Use 1.* Against the chief good of epicures, which is pleasure. Sadness is better than it.

*Use 2.* To teach us contentment, yea, and thankfulness too, when God sendeth occasions of sorrow and sadness for affliction, Job i. 21.

*Obj.* Psalm xxxv. 27.

*Ans.* Prosperity that will best hold and least corrupt, is that which is sown in tears, Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6. This sad winter Christmas, as they call it, is better than all the carnal jollity wont heretofore to be exercised at that time of the year.

*Use 3.* For a sign of trial of our hearts. Where they delight to be, such they are. If they delight

to be in the house of mirth, they are vain and foolish ; if in the house of mourning, they are wise, Mat. vi. 21.

*Use 4.* To teach us who are fittest instruments to dispense reproofs—wise men, ver. 5 ; Prov. xv. 12. The wise and the reprover are synonyma, Prov. xxv. 12. Great wisdom requisite to discern, first, Of faults, whether beams or motes ; secondly, Of the offenders, how more or less easy to be wrought upon, as the body in phisic, Prov. xvii. 10.

*Use 5.* To exhort to patient and willing hearing of just reproofs : a sound chiding is better music than the song of fools. It is an ornament if well heard, Prov. xxv. 12, as arguing humility, wisdom, sincerity, or fondness, Prov. ix. 8, 9. Sound flesh will abide rubbing ; not so galled. They are the way of life, Prov. x. 17, and wisdom, Prov. xv. 22, 31.

*Ver. 7.* *Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad ; and a gift destroyeth the heart.*

Translated *surely*. I do not find that ever the conjunction so signifieth in Scripture, but as it is translated in ver. 6, for so it is fitly to be translated here. *Surely*, neither standeth with the grammar or logic of the text : no coherence will so be made of the sentence. But translate it *for*, and the context runs thus : Solomon had said, ver. 5, It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than the song of fools.

This he proveth, first, From the vanity of the song of fools, illustrated by a simile taken from the crackling of thorns under a pot, ver. 6. Of this was spoken in the former verse.

Secondly, From the madness of the oppression of such a reprover. To oppress a wise reprover, 1. Makes a wise man mad : a wise man, whether it be, 1. The reproved—he will grow outrageous by oppressing his reprover, as did Asa, 2 Chron. xvi. 10. 2. The reprover—oppression may distemper him, Jer. xx. 7–9, and 14–18. Secondly, Destroys the heart, or life, of the gift. Gift cannot properly or grammatically be the nominative case before the verb, but by anomaly ; for it is of the feminine gender, the verb *destroy* of the masculine ; neither is the sense so suitable here.

Thirdly, From the excellency of the end of a word,

דבר, to wit, the word of reproof, above the beginning of it; the beginning of it may be harsh and unpleasant, but the end of it is wholesome and medicinable, ver. 8.

Fourthly, From the excellency of the patient in spirit (as otherwise, so especially in hearing and bearing the reproofs of the wise) above the proud in spirit, ver. 8. Whereupon he inferreth a grave and wise admonition, not to be of a hasty spirit to anger, neither in hearing reproofs, nor generally in any other case, taken from the proper subject of the residence of anger: for 'anger resteth in the bosom of fools,' ver. 9.

*Doct.* It is better to hear and bear the rebuke of the wise with submission and patience, than with oppression and passion, with pride and anger. This seemeth to be the very proper scope of Solomon's words in this place, 2 Sam. xii. 7-13; 2 Chron. xix. 2-4; 1 Kings xxii. 8, 'Let not the king say so;' Mat. xvi. 23; Gal. iii. 11-14.

*Reason 1.* From the madness that a wise man shall fall into by oppressing a wise reprovee; in that, first, He will distemper and enrage himself, 2 Chron. xvi. 10. Secondly, He will destroy the heart and life of the gift of reproof. It will no more profit than physic vomited up, or a plaster cast aside. Thirdly, He may also distemper and enrage the reprovee, Jer. xx. 7-9, 14-20. At least it will force him to keep silence, Amos v. 10, 13. This may be referred to the second.

*Reason 2.* From the excellency of the word of reproof in the end, above what it appeareth in the beginning, Ps. cxiv. 5; Prov. xxviii. 33. Physic may be bitter and loathsome at first, yet health by it recompenseth that.

*Reason 3.* From the excellency of the patient in spirit, above the proud in spirit, ver. 8. Patience, first, Possesseth the soul, Luke xxi. 19; secondly, Inheriteth promises, Heb. vi. 12; thirdly, It maketh us perfect, James i. 4.

*Reason 4.* Implied in the text, ver. 8, from the root of all rejection of reproof, which is pride of spirit, Prov. xiii. 1, and xv. 12. Pride, first, God abhorreth, and scorneth, and resisteth, 1 Pet. v. 5; Ps. cxxxviii. 6; Prov. iii. 34. Secondly, Is the preface of sudden destruction, Prov. xxix. 1.

*Use 1.* To teach us to eschew all oppression, espe-

cially of our reprovees. It argueth us and maketh us mad, Prov. xxviii. 16; it discourageth a reprovee from putting forth the faithfulness of his brotherly love, Jer. xx. 9; Amos v. 13; yea, he is now excused in his silence, Mat. vii. 6; it eateth out the heart and life of a gift, of the reproof given, 1 Kings xxii. 8, 27, 28; 2 Kings v. 12, 13.

*Use 2.* To teach us to be patient in hearing and bearing reproofs, The end of them is better than the beginning; the beginning may seem harsh and bitter, but the end is wholesome and comfortable, as of all afflictions, Heb. xii. 11; 2 Cor. i. 6, 7, and chaps. vii.-xi. It is not meant of all things universally that their end is better than their beginning, for it is otherwise in some things, 2 Pet. ii. 20; Mat. xii. 45; Prov. xx. 21: but it holdeth in this duty of admonition, and all afflictions inward and outward to the godly. All impatience here argueth pride of spirit, as appeareth by the opposition, text, ver. 8.

*Use 3.* To teach us to express patience rather than pride, and to prefer it both in our judgments and in our practice. ארך רוח is a man of a long breath, which argueth a patient spirit. Men of a short breath are soon hot; men of hot hearts breathe quick and short, as in choleric and aguish men. Patient in spirit exceeds the proud, first, In understanding and wisdom, Prov. xvii. 27; רוח קר *frigidus spiritu*, a man of a cool spirit is of great understanding. Secondly, In strength and courage, Prov. xxv. 28, and xvi. 32. Thirdly, In honour, Prov. xxii. 4. Fourthly, In profiting by all means of grace: in word, Luke viii. 15; in afflictions, Rom. v. 3-5. Some think it their excellency and magnanimity to bear no coals at any man's hand, but to give every man as good as he brings. Patience they condemn for cowardice, but the Spirit of God judgeth otherwise.

Ver. 9. *Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.*

*Doct. 1.* To be of a hasty spirit to anger, God forbids it to his people, Prov. xiv. 17; James i. 19; Prov. xvi. 32. The spirit is hasty to anger when anger ariseth, first, Without cause, Gen. iv. 5, 6; Jonah iv. 9; this is hasting before the cause. Secondly, Without measure; passing the bounds,

1. Of our calling, Acts vii. 26, 27; Gen. xxxiv. 25, with xlix. 7; 2. Of love—first, As when instead of brotherly admonition we fall to clamour, railing, scolding, not reproving sin by Scripture names and arguments, but vexatious terms, Eph. iv. 31; secondly, When we are not fit to pray for those we are angry with, Exod. xxxii. 29–32; 1 Sam. viii. 6, with xii. 23, and xv. 35. 3. Of reason, Luke vi. 11; Acts xxii. 23; 2 Chron. xxviii. 9. 4. Of justice, Zech. i. 15. 5. Of due season: (1.) After sun-setting, Eph. iv. 26, 27; (2.) After the offender's acknowledgment of his offence, Luke xvii. 3, 4. And these are hastening before the measure or proportion of the cause.

*Reason 1.* From the proper subject of the residence and rest of anger; it resteth in the bosom of fools. Text, wherein Solomon takes off an excuse which men are wont to make of their foolishness: Though I be somewhat hasty, yet I thank God anger doth not rest with me. Yes, saith Solomon, if thou beest hasty, anger resteth with thee, and argueth thee a fool. For a man could not have anger so ready at hand hastily if it did not rest with him; the habit of sinful anger resteth there, though the act be quickly transient.

*Obj.* Choleric men are soon stirred, and yet they are not all fools. The fools are commonly sanguine, as the simple, light, fond-fool; or phlegmatic, as the dull ass-fool; or melancholic, as the lunatic fool.

*Ans.* A choleric fool is a frantic fool. Every complexion in excess is subject to folly, yea, to madness; but if cholera be subdued to reason, choleric men, though they could be soon hasty if they see cause, yet will not be where there is none. A man of quick speed for race yet will not run till he see cause.

*Quest.* But what folly is in anger?

*Ans.* First, Rashness, Isa. xxxii. 4; secondly, Stiffness, Jonah iv. 9—blind wilfulness; thirdly, Outrageousness, Prov. xxvii. 4; fourthly, Unprofitableness. Anger unfitteth a man, first, To do good, James i. 28; secondly, To take good, 2 Kings v. 12. As a man, when his house is all on a light fire, himself in the midst of it, can hear no direction given him from without, nor himself able to do aught within; so is a man in a burning anger neither able to direct himself, nor to take counsel from others.

*Reason 2.* From the image of God, which should shine forth in us. He is slow to anger, Ps. ciii. 8.

*Use.* To cast discouragement, as it were cool water, upon this angry passion. The sea, when it foameth and rageth, purgeth itself, and a pot boiling casteth out foam and scum, but a man boiling with anger and wrath, both uttereth his own shame, and yet keepeth the filth within. Physicians count it a sign of deadly ague, when the sickness or distemper so altereth the countenance that you cannot know the same man, so Job xiv. 20. Anger will do as much, Dan. ii. 19. Physicians will also say it is a sign of the healing and abatement of an ague, when in a hot fit the tongue is clean; but if the tongue be foul, it is a sign the disease is still strong. When a man in his anger giveth never a foul word, it is a sign of a healthful spirit; but the soul is distempered, if the speech in anger be foul. If a glass bottle be full of clean water, though it be stirred, there ariseth no mud; but if mud arise when it is stirred, the water was foul in the bottom: so is the spirit of a man foul within, that being stirred sheweth distemper. Let therefore all hastiness to anger against all sorts of persons at all times be eschewed. For Solomon here limiteth it to none: be it against husband or wife, child or servant, friends or enemies. 2. Yet this hindereth not just anger, Eph. iv. 26; 3. But it much more condemneth all malice, hatred, study of revenge, for all these are from anger resting in the bosom.

Ver. 10. *Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.*

Solomon in this chapter hath hitherto shewed the vanity of sundry things of good account in the world, in comparison of other things of less esteem; and hath therefore preferred, first, A good name before a good ointment; secondly, The day of death before the birthday; thirdly, To go to the house of mourning before going to the house of feasting; fourthly, To hear the rebuke of the wise before the song of fools. In this verse he goeth on with the like argument, not preferring elder times before the present, though men generally are apt so to do. Parts two: 1. A prohibition of taking it for granted that elder times are better than these, and of the in-

quity after the reason of it. Say not thou, What is it that the former times were better than these? 2. A reason of the prohibition, taken from the want of wisdom in such an apprehension and inquiry; for thou dost not inquire wisely, or out of wisdom, concerning this.

*Doct. 1.* The ordinary conceit that men have of the excellency of former times above these, and their ordinary inquiry into the reason thereof, is not out of wisdom. Heathen authors may be quoted, not for divine or evangelical points, but natural or moral. Both heathen and Christians are wont to have such a conceit, that former times were better. Horace's old man is *laudator temporis acti, se puero*. Again, saith he, *Damnosa quid non immittit dies? Ætas parentum pejor avis tulit nos nequiores, mor daturos progeniem vitiosiore*. Boetius, (*de consolatione philosophiæ*), *Fortunata nimium prior ætas, &c.*

Thus ordinarily men extol the cheapness of former times—their great hospitality, their kind neighbourhood, their honest dealing, their skilful workmanship, none such now-a-days; their liberal alms-deeds, their devout piety, their deep wisdom, their valiant acts. The reasons which men are wont to give of it are not wise: as, first, *Lassa effæta natura*; the decay of the strength and goodness of nature in the world and all the creatures. But this is no good reason; for nature decayed by the flood, yet the times have been better. Secondly, The goodness of the old religion, Jer. xlv. 17, 18. The heathen thought the empire flourished more under the worship of Jupiter, and other false gods, than under Christian religion. The devouter papists think the same—that it was a better world under their religion than ours; but if the old religion have been worse, the following times may be worse for their sins, Jer. xli. 21–23. Thirdly, The change of times which some think are always for the worse: so Emannel Sa. But neither times nor stars were made to rule us.

*Reason* of the want of wisdom of such a conceit and such inquiry. First, From the like estate of former times as of these; no new thing under the sun, Eccles. i. 9.

Secondly, From the cause of the worse appearance of present times, from fond mistakings. As, first, In youth want of judgment to discern and judge of

good or evil; thy judgment then was green and raw. Young men's spirits are green and cheerful; and so looking through a green glass, as it were, thou sawest all things green and pleasant. Old men are splenetic and sad, and see all things through dark and sad fumes, and so accordingly think hardly of them; besides, by better experience, old men now can discern much evil which before they could not observe. Secondly, Through ignorance of history, which speaketh of as bad times as ours; or else through the choice that historians make to tell of notable matters, and neglect common occurrences. Besides, it is pleasant to read in stories of great wars and exploits; but to feel them would seem tragical. Thirdly, Through following sense in this conceit, evils present seem worst; as in governments, so in the whole life of man. Fourthly, Through discontentment with a man's own personal condition, and envy at others, and vainglory in ourselves; hence Nestor, *Oh mihi præteritos referat si, &c.* *Vitio malignitatis humanæ vetera semper in laude, præsentia fastidio esse*, Tacitus. Fifthly, Through curiosity, whilst men look more at others than themselves; whereas if every man laboured to amend himself, the times would soon amend.

*Reason 2.* From the true estate of this matter, which may be discerned and observed in these particulars: first, When princes and people are good in God's sight, the times are better, 2 Chron. xv. 1–6; Prov. xxix. 2; when they are wicked, then worse, *ibid.*; Jer. xxii. 15–18; Lev. xxvi. throughout; Deut. xxviii. David's time better than Saul's, but Rehoboam's afterwards worse. Secondly, When churches are well administered, and encouraged therein, the times are better, else worse, Hosea ii. 16–23, with ver. 8, 9. Thirdly, Sometimes the times are better for some thing, and worse for others, both formerly and after. David's time better than Solomon's for war and noble victories; Solomon's better for peace and plenty, and building and merchandise. In the same times, one place may be growing better, when another groweth worse; Ephesus may be decaying, when Thyatira increaseth, Rev. ii. 4, 19. Some in every age are good; even now there be men *antiqua fide, præcis moribus*; and some in every age are naught.

*Reason 3.* From the principal cause of all passages

in the world; which is not man's weakness or goodness, but chiefly the wise, and strong, and good providence of God, who presenteth every age with a new stage of acts and actors, 1 Cor. iv. 9. And if a poet would not present his spectators but with choice variety of matters, how much less God?

*Obj.* Nebuchadnezzar's image may seem to imply a decay of each age, from gold to silver, from silver to brass, at last to iron, Dan. ii. 31-33.

*Ans.* First, This image concerned times four hundred years after Solomon's days. Secondly, After all those monarchies destroyed, the latter times will be best, Dan. vii. 27, with ii. 44. Thirdly, The image doth not decipher the manners—to wit, virtues or vices—of the times, but the several conditions of the monarchies. That of Babel being more full of majesty, Dan. iv. 36, and peace, Jer. xxix. 7; that of Persia inferior herein, Dan. ix. 25, troublous times; that of Macedonia making strong and loud noise like brass; that of Rome crushing all the former like iron.

*Use 1.* To teach us to observe the depravation of nature in the blindness of our minds; who are so far from discerning spiritual things, 1 Cor. ii. 14, that we cannot rightly judge of moral or civil things, Rom. i. 21; Jude 10; Gen. vi. 5.

*Use 2.* To reprove the fond admiration of elder times. Though there be use of antiquity, and of the study of antiquity, yet not to approve all their sayings and doings as best.

*Use 3.* To stir us up to a wise consideration of our present times, and the amendment thereof. For this end, first, Every one to endeavour to amend one, and as many more as are under their charge, Joshua xxiv. 15. Secondly, Consider and see to the good administration of churches. If Joseph in the house of Jacob be sold into Egypt, look for a public famine. Thirdly, Let magistrates and courts walk in righteousness and peace; the whole country fareth the better for it.

Ver. 11. *Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun.*

Ver. 12. *For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.*

Solomon, in the former verse, having judged it to

spring from want of wisdom, to conceive the former times to be always better than the latter, and to inquire, as men ordinarily do, of the reason thereof, he giveth in these and the following verses three several observations touching the better and worse estate of one age above another; as at any time, so for his own time. First, For his own time, wherein wisdom and wealth abounded, he telleth us not that it was better than other times, but that it was, so far forth, a good time. Wisdom, saith he, is good with an inheritance, and profitable for men, ver. 11. And this he proveth, 1. From the benefits which either of them yield apart. Wisdom is a defence, or rather a protection or refreshing, and money is the like, ver. 12. 2. From the more excellent benefit of wisdom. But the excellency of wisdom is, it giveth life to the owners of it, ver. 12. Secondly, He calleth us to consider the work of God in the estate of the times, as in his own age, so in every age; and the insufficiency of any man to make straight that which God hath made crooked, ver. 13, and therefore to make a good use of the vicissitude of changes from age to age, ver. 14. Thirdly, He declareth that in the best times—at least, in his own time—he hath seen much evil, which he specieth, ver. 15 to the end of the chapter; and some good, ver. 19, 28.

*Doct. 1.* Wisdom and wealth are then most profitable, (or do then most good,) when they are enjoyed together, (or when they are met together.) It is then best for any person in whom they are so met, and best for any age, when the same age enjoyeth both. Thus much God implieth in his blessing of Solomon, 1 Kings iii. 10-13; for he preferreth Solomon above all former and present kings in respect of the concurrences of both these.

*Reason 1.* From the defect that is found in either wisdom or wealth alone. Of wisdom alone, first, It is not heard nor regarded, Eccles. ix. 16; secondly, It seldom getteth up to such places of authority where it may put forth itself, Prov. xix. 7. He wants friends to speak and make way for him. Of wealth alone, first, It lieth unprofitably by us, neither doing ourselves or others that good it might, Prov. xvii. 16; Luke viii. 14; secondly, It maketh men worse, Eccles. v. 13, proud, 1 Tim. vi. 17, covetous, Hab. ii. 5, and churlish, 1 Sam. xxv. 10.

11; thirdly, It exposeth us to contempt, 1 Sam. xxv. 25.

*Reason 2.* From some benefit in either of them alone. Wisdom is a defence, the word is a *shadow* in the text; which is, first, For defence, Ps. xvii. 8; secondly, For refreshing, Isa. xxv. 4, 5. Wealth is a defence and refreshing, 1. Against hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness, and injuries of suits. 2. Procuring us many friends, Prov. xiv. 20. and many other outward comforts, Ecces. x. 19. Wisdom is a defence and refreshing, first, As conveying us under the wings of Christ, Mat. vii. 24, 25; and so, 1. Giving life to us, and direction to our way; 2. Defending us from sin, hell, wrath, Job xxviii. 28, and afflictions and evils, Prov. xxii. 35. Secondly, Counselling others for their good, Ecces. x. 10.

*Reason 3.* From the complete profit of both wisdom and wealth together. For, 1. Wisdom employeth wealth to the best advantage, both for another world, Luke xvi. 8, 9, and for this world: First, For ourselves and others in the education of children; secondly, In peace and war, Prov. xxiv. 5, 6. 2. Wealth employeth wisdom to the best advantage. It is a crown to the wise, Prov. xiv. 24; a crown for honour and authority, Hosea xiii. 1. Job having lost his wealth, lost his honour and authority, Job xxix. throughout, compared with chap. xxx. 1, 9-13.

*Use 1.* To refute the popish opinion of the perfection of the estate of voluntary poverty.

*Use 2.* To shew us the feeble and comfortless estate of such as want both wisdom and wealth.

*Use 3.* To teach wise men to seek for wealth, and wealthy men for wisdom, and all that want both to seek both. If either alone be so helpful, how much more both together. If either alone be defective, not so both together.

*Use 4.* To teach such as would marry to seek both these together, if they may be had. But let the wealthy man rather seek a wise wife, as David did Abigail, than a wealthy.

*Use 5.* To teach us what use to make of them both together, for a defence and refreshing.

*Use 6.* To prefer wisdom above wealth; wisdom is the more excellent, as giving life, text. If we trust in the shadow of wealth, we shall find it, like Jonah's gourd, failing us when we have most need,

Prov. xi. 4; therefore crack not thy conscience for wealth, Prov. x. 2.

Ver. 13. *Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?*

Ver. 14. *In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.*

*Doct.* Whatsoever the estate of times be, it is our part to consider the work of God as so disposing the times, and in setting good and evil times one against another; and accordingly in good times to be in goodness, and in ill times to look at God's hand as only able to amend therein. As who should say, Look not at the creature as the chief agent in the estate of the times, but consider his hand in all estates, and make use of them, as his hand leadeth unto, Job i. 21.

1. It is God's work, first, To send. 1. Good times, 2 Chron. ii. 11; 2. Evil times, Prov. xxviii. 2. Secondly, To set good and evil times in a vicissitude or interchange, one contrary over against another. Jer. xviii. 7, 9. In good times, first, God maketh men's, or at least some chief men's, hearts and ways right before him, 1 Sam. xiii. 14; secondly, God giveth them a right course, and good success in their proceedings, Jer. xxii. 15, 16; 2 Chron. xvii. 3-5. In evil times, first, God giveth men up to the crookedness of their own hearts and ways, Ps. cxxv. 5, and lxxxi. 11, 12; 2 Chron. xxviii. 1; secondly, God sendeth them cross and crooked issues of their ways, 2 Chron. xxviii. 1-6, 16-20; Jer. xxii. 17-19; Ps. xviii. 26.

2. God setteth these good and evil times interchangeably one against another. Saul's times were bad; the times of David and Solomon good. Rehoboam and Abijam bad; Asa and Jehoshaphat good. Joram and Joash bad; Uzziah and Jotham good. Ahaz bad; Hezekiah good. Manasseh and Amon bad; Josias good; his successors to the captivity bad, after the captivity good.

*Reason 1.* From God's people's abuse of prosperity unto self-confidence. Ps. xxx. 6, 7, and luxury, Deut. xxxii. 15; hence followeth calamity and adversity.

*Reason 2.* From the humiliation and reformation

of God's people in adversity, Hosea v. 15, with vi. 1, 2.

*Reason 3.* To the end we should find nothing after God, as in the text—to wit, first, No stability in the creature, but unsettled vicissitudes; secondly, No fault in God and his administrations. So the phrase and word is taken, John xiv. 30; Job xxxi. 7.

3. Accordingly it is our parts in good times to be in goodness, ver. 14. It implieth, first, To be in a good frame; secondly, To take a good course; thirdly, To be of good cheer or comfort—to be joyful; as husbandmen make hay when the sun shineth, and mariners hoist up and spread abroad their sails when the wind bloweth fair, Acts ix. 31.

*Reason 1.* From God's expectation of store of good fruit in such times, Isa. v. 1-4.

*Reason 2.* From God's sudden change of times, when they are thus abused, Isa. v. 5, 6; Deut. xxviii. 47, 48.

In evil times to look at God's hand, as only able to amend them, Prov. xxi. 1.

*Reason 1.* From God's sovereign power over, first, Men's hearts, Prov. xxi. 1; secondly, The change of times, Acts i. 7; Ps. xxxi. 15.

*Reason 2.* From the unprofitableness of all the use of creature means and helps without God, Isa. xxii. 8-14; Hosea v. 13, 14; 2 Chron. xxviii. 20, 21.

*Use 1.* To teach us in all the estate of times not to look so much at the creatures or instruments, but at the hand of God. If princes be wicked, God giveth such, and the people into their hands, Hosea xiii. 11; Zech. xi. 6. If princes be good, the Lord giveth such as a favour to his people, 2 Chron. ii. 11. Heathens could say, *Deus nobis hæc otia fecit.*

*Use 2.* To teach us, whatever the times be, not to look at them as unchangeable; for God will set one of them contrary to another, and we know not how soon.

*Use 3.* To teach us therefore in good times to be in goodness—that is, first, Be in a good and thankful frame; secondly, Take a good course, Acts ix. 31—be fruitful; thirdly, Be of good comfort. Break off from sinful courses; it will prolong tranquillity, Dan. iv. 7.

*Use 4.* To teach us in ill times not chiefly to quarrel the creature, much less to quarrel God's providence, Isa. viii. 21; neither to imagine that

we can redress the evil of the times by our own wisdom or power. No; look we rather up to God, who can make straight that which is crooked, both in men's hearts, ways, or estates; and therefore use we such means as may prevail with him so to do.

Means: first, Let our uncircumcised hearts be humbled to accept of the punishment of our iniquities, and to confess our iniquities, and the iniquities of our fathers, Lev. xxvi. 40, 41, where we have confession and contrition; secondly, Look up to Christ our Redeemer, the prince of the kings of the earth, to deliver us, Judges x. 15; thirdly, Serious reformation, Judges x. 15.

Ver. 15. *All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.*

Ver. 16. *Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself overwise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?*

Ver. 17. *Be not overmuch wicked; neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?*

Ver. 18. *It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.*

Coherence, see in ver. 11, 12.

*Doct.* In the best times of church and commonwealth, a wise man may observe there are just men that perish in their righteousness, and there are wicked men that continue long in their wickedness. By perishing, sundry understand crushing and breaking, or oppression in their righteousness, in their righteous and just cause; as Naboth in Ahab's time, 1 Kings xxi. 13; and Ahimelech in Saul's time, 1 Sam. xxii. 16, 18, 19. But it will be hard, if not impossible, to shew such an instance in Solomon's time, though in David's time Uriah so perished; but that was before Solomon was born. But he speaketh of what he had seen in his time. By a wicked man continuing long in his wickedness, they understand prolonging his days or his life in wickedness; but his life is not in the text. And if that were the sense, it would cross his reason which he giveth in ver. 17, why they should not continue long in wickedness; taken from the shortness of



the lives of such : for why shouldst thou die before thy time ? I take it therefore by a just man is meant, such a just man as is just in his own righteousness, and at last decayeth and perisheth in it. The same word is translated *void*, Deut. xxxii. 28 ; void of counsel, is perishing in their counsels. So the rich man is said to fade away and perish in his ways, as the flower perisheth and fadeth in the heat of the sun, Job viii. 11. Thus the Jews, establishing their own righteousness, Rom. x. 3. perished in their righteousness, and did not obtain the righteousness of Christ, Rom. xi. 7. and ix. 31, 32. And thus Solomon might observe many in his age ; and like enough an eminent man in the church, Abiathar the high priest, 1 Kings ii. 26, 27. Ezekiel observed many such in his time, Ezek. xviii. 24. That many do continue long in their wickedness, appeareth by Solomon's testimony, Eccles. viii. 12 : by David's, Ps. lxxviii. 21 ; by Job's, chap. iii. 2 ; by Isaiah, chap. lxxv. 20.

*Reasons* of the just man's perishing in his righteousness : 1. From the carnalness of such a just man's heart ; his nature is not born anew, but only awed by some power, either of, first, Legal terrors, Deut. v. 27 ; secondly, Good education, 2 Chron. xxiv. 2, 17, 18 ; thirdly, Good company. Such as return to evil, were always dogs and swine, though washed and cleansed, 2 Pet. ii. 18, 22.

*Reason 2.* From God's rejection of all self-confidence, Jer. ii. 27 ; Luke xviii. 9, 14 ; 1 Sam. ii. 9.

*Reason 3.* From the power of the spirit of the gospel to blow upon and wither all his carnal and moral excellency, Isa. xl. 6-8.

*Reason 4.* From the stability only of faith in Christ, and the righteousness of faith, Isa. vii. 9 ; 2 Cor. i. 24 ; Rom. xi. 20.

*Reasons* of the wicked's long continuance in wickedness : 1. From the suitability of it to our nature, Gen. vi. 5 ; Job xv. 16 ; Jer. xi. 15.

*Reason 2.* From God's judicial leaving of men to their own ways, especially after refusal of means of grace, Ezek. xxiv. 13 ; Rev. xxii. 11.

*Use 1.* Not to be righteous overmuch, ver. 16—that is, first, Do not continue in this righteousness, in the same sense as he not wicked overmuch ; secondly, Make not too much of it ; for upon trial, it neither is our righteousness, Phil. iii. 7, 8, nor a

good evidence of it ; trust not in it, Luke xviii. 9. It is a mercy if God shake us out of it. A double shaking is requisite to enjoy a settled kingdom : shaking, first, Of our earth, which was by the law, Heb. xii. 26 ; secondly, Of our heaven, which is by the conviction of our righteousness, in which we place our heaven upon earth, to be loss and dross till we come to partake in Christ, and faith in him.

*Use 2.* Not to be wicked overmuch,—that is, not to multiply wickedness by continuing long in it ; not make more of wickedness than it is worth by promising ourselves rest in it, Deut. xxix. 19 ; Ps. xxxvi. 2 ; nor make yourselves more wicked than you are, as Cain did, by despair, Gen. iv. 13.

*Use 3.* To humble us in the sense of the corruption of our nature, who are sooner weary of our righteousness than of our wickedness. In the one we decay, in the other we continue long.

Ver. 16. *Be not righteous overmuch ; neither make thyself overwise : why shouldst thou destroy thyself ?*

Ver. 17. *Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish : why shouldst thou die before thy time ?*

Ver. 18. *It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this ; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand : for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.*

In the former verse Solomon delivered his third observation touching the estate of the present times, to wit, what notable things he had observed in his own time. First, That he had observed in the days of his vanity a just man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man holding out long in his wickedness ; a second, see ver. 19 ; a third, see ver. 20 ; a fourth, see ver. 21, 22 ; a fifth, see ver. 23, 24 ; a sixth, see ver. 25, 26. But from that first observation Solomon inferreth a double corollary, first, Against excessive righteousness, which he dissuadeth from, 1. By the disease accompanying it, which is overmuch wisdom ; 2. By the danger following it : Why wilt thou destroy thyself ? Secondly, Against continuance and growth in wickedness, which he dissuadeth from, first, By the disease accompanying it, folly ; be not foolish. Secondly, By the danger following it, untimely death, ver. 17 ; and urgeth the acceptance of both these counsels by two motives : 1. By the goodness of both : 2. By

the help of God to eschew both the contrary evils, ver. 18: be not righteous overmuch. First, Some take this and the next verse to be spoken by Solomon in the person of an epicure or carnal politician: seeing righteous men do sometime perish in their righteousness, when wicked men prolong their days in wickedness, it is a good course not to be over-just. And yet, lest that should seem too gross and offensive, it is a good course also not to be over-wicked, but to keep a mean between both. But if Solomon spake in the person of the wicked, he would not second it with his own approbation of the goodness of both courses, ver. 18. Besides, Solomon would not leave such corrupt counsel without some aspersion of folly or vanity upon it, as he doth in the like case, Eccles. iv. 5, 6. Ver. 5 sheweth ver. 6 to be spoken in the person of the slothful man.

Secondly, Others think by just overmuch he meaneth rigorously just, who will remit no punishments, nor debts, nor rights, but exact justice to extremity. And, indeed, had David punished Joab for his murder of Abner and Amasa, he had destroyed himself, 2 Sam. iii. 39. But that overmuch righteousness is opposed to clemency or moderation, whereas this here is opposed to wickedness.

Thirdly, Others therefore understand the righteousness here spoken of to be *universalis justitia*, universal righteousness, opposite to all wickedness. But neither can that be the meaning of the word here; for, 1. No man can exceed in that righteousness, he cannot be overmuch righteous in that sense—no, though he were as righteous as angels, as Christ Jesus, yea, infinitely righteous as God is; Ps. xvi. 3, 'to the excellent.' 2. Neither can a man in Scripture phrase be said to perish in that righteousness though he should die for it. Stephen dying for his righteousness, or any other martyr, is never said to perish in his righteousness, but to glorify God, John xxi. 18, 19; yea, and to honour and prefer himself, 2 Tim. ii. 12; 2 Cor. iv. 17. But in Scripture phrase a man is said to perish in his iniquity, Joshua xxxii. 20.

Fourthly, It remaineth therefore that by overmuch righteousness is meant righteousness over and above the rule of the word, as by overmuch wisdom, coupled herewith, is meant wisdom above that which is written, 1 Cor. iv. 6. Of this over-

much righteousness there be three sorts: 1. That which is called legal righteousness; so called, not because it is answerable to the law, but because justiciaries take it so, as Paul sometimes did, and other Jews and papists, Phil. iii. 6.

*Quest.* 1. But how can this be overmuch, which is over-little?

*Ans.* As wisdom is called overmuch, which yet falleth short of true wisdom.

*Quest.* 2. Wherein standeth the overmuchness of this righteousness?

*Ans.* 1. In a man's overmuch esteem of it, and overmuch confidence of his own estate by it; he taketh it to be true righteousness, whereas it is neither true justification, Phil. iii. 7, 8, nor sanctification, or inherent righteousness, Mat. v. 20. 2. In a man's overmuch confidence of his ability by the strength of it; the Israelites by it undertook and vowed universal obedience, which, without a better heart, they could not perform, Deut. xxvii. 29. As, first, When we presume to walk in the strength of it, and not by faith in Christ, Mat. xxvi. 33, 35; secondly, When we discern no defect in our best duties, Neh. xiii. 22; thirdly, When we think we have earned any reward at God's hand by it, Luke xvii. 10.

2. Righteousness of works of supererogation, Micah vi. 6, 7, works above what the law required, in which also a man may perish.

3. Righteousness of works of good intention, as that of Uzzah, intending to save the ark by touching it against the law, 2 Sam. vi. 6, with Num. iv. 15, in which he died, 2 Sam. vi. 7. So Saul's sacrifice, out of a good intention, but against a commandment, lost his kingdom, 1 Sam. xiii. 12-14; see also, 1 Sam. xv. 21, 12, 23.

4. Righteousness inherent, prized above the word; righteousness of a cause over-eagerly maintained, as in Job's case, justifying himself rather than God, which was overmuch righteousness. Yet this fourth may be rather handled as a consecratory in the verse, for no man perisheth in this righteousness, though he may fall foully.

*Doct.* Excess of righteousness, or to be righteous overmuch, is accompanied with an overweening conceit of a man's own wisdom, and followed with causeless destruction of a man's self, ver. 16.

Solomon joining this warning, Neither make thyself overwise, to the former, Be not righteous overmuch, implieth, that an overweening conceit of our own wisdom doth accompany overmuch righteousness. And adding this reason, For why wilt thou destroy thyself? he implieth that these will procure destruction, and that without cause; and therefore he asketh, why?

*Reason 1.* Why it is accompanied with overmuch wisdom; because it maketh us wise without the word, and above the word, which ought not to be, 1 Cor. iv. 6. The word is the rule of wisdom, Isa. viii. 20.

*Reason 2.* Why it is followed with certain danger of destruction; because, first, It is ever joined with pride, which is a forerunner of destruction, Prov. xvi. 18. Secondly, It reflecteth imperfection and insufficiency upon God's wisdom and word. For it is less dishonour to God that a man do a sin against the word, than a good duty above the word; the one argueth frailty and imperfection in us, the other in God. Thirdly, It submitteth not itself to the righteousness of Christ, but men in it go about to set up a saviour without Christ, and against him, Rom. ix. 31, 32, with xi. 7. Christ is indeed our wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 24, and righteousness, 1 Cor. i. 30; Jer. xxiii. 6.

*Use 1.* To prevent and refute the misapplying of this text to the reproach and discouragement of growth and forwardness in grace and Christian duties. Even the heathen philosopher Aristotle could say, Though virtue consisteth in a mediocrity between two extremes, yet not in a mediocrity of degrees of goodness, but in a hyperbole or excess, *Politic.* lib. vii. cap. 1. Yea, it reproveth the despising of legal duties; for though they be not righteousness, yet they are gifts of the Spirit, restraining from sin, constraining to duty, and a greater gift from God than riches or honour. Brass is good, only it is counterfeit when it is put off for gold.

*Use 2.* To dissuade and direct from all this excess of righteousness here forbidden; not from the duties, but from taking them for our righteousness. When we have lived long in them, they are either our righteousness imputed or inherent.

*Quest.* What would you have us to do more?

*Ans.* 1. Know why Christ is good, as Mat. xix.

17; feel your, first, Want of him and of faith in him, John xvi. 7, 8; 2. Worth of him, Cant. iv. 10. Secondly, Listen duly to the word for some promise, doctrine, or example of grace, in which Christ is wont to convey his Spirit to lost souls to beget faith; 1. Either persuading us of grace from God to our souls in him. Ps. cxix. 43; 2. Or at least setting up him in our hearts as our sovereign good, Ps. lxxiii. 25, 36. Thirdly, If you feel him not applying promises to you, nor himself in any word of grace with power, pray over the promises, and meditate on them; they will so give faith. Observe if this do not utterly pull down all our high thoughts of former worth in ourselves, Prov. xxx. 2, and do not make us sensible of our own disability to any duty, 2 Cor. iii. 15. If the Lord thus carry us forth, it will take us off from overmuch righteousness, which will leave us destitute and desolate of Christ for our justification, and of the Spirit for our sanctification. Beware likewise of resting in works of good intention, without or beside the word.

Sincere righteousness may be overmuch prized, when we, first, Presume to walk in the strength of it, and not of faith, Mat. xxvi. 33, 35. Secondly, When we discern no defects in our best duties, Neh. xiii. 22. Thirdly, When we think we have earned any reward at God's hand by it, Luke xvii. 10.

Ver. 17. *Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time?*

Be not wicked overmuch, though the word is הרבה, as before, (אל תרשע, not, be not overmuch wicked, but do not wickedly overmuch,) but yet, if we take it as it is translated, the sense is the same.

To be wicked overmuch implieth two things: 1. Aggravation of sin beyond the word; 2. Multiplication of it. First, To make a man's self more wicked than the word maketh him; so excessively wicked as thereupon to shut out a man's self from all hope of mercy, or otherwise worse than he is. This excess a man that is convinced of the emptiness of his righteousness, which he prized overmuch before, is apt to sink into, even to despair. Cain, who before thought himself as righteous as his brother, and his sacrifice as acceptable as his, being convinced by God of his wickedness, sunk into despair of mercy, Gen. iv. 15. Hence also some think they have

sinned against the Holy Ghost; others, that they have quenched the Spirit, whereas rather the Spirit hath enlightened and awaked them. But this sense doth not fully answer the opposition in ver. 14, though it answer well enough to ver. 16.

Secondly, The phrase may well be translated, Do not evil much, that is, do not multiply transgression; as Amos iv. 4, the word is used in this sense. Sin is multiplied either, 1. By continuance in it, Rom. vi. 1; 2. By growth unto full measure of iniquity, Mat. xxiii. 32. A curse.

*Doct.* Excessive aggravation of sin, and all continuance and growth in sin, is accompanied with folly, and followed with untimely death. Sin is excessively aggravated when it is made, first, Greater than can be forgiven, as Gen. iv. 13; see the original. So when we judge we have sinned against the Holy Ghost, when we have only lost the comforts of the Spirit. Secondly, Greater than will be forgiven, in regard either of our present hardness of heart, which we despair of softening, or in regard of our persons, which we judge to be reprobate. Thirdly, A sin of a higher kind than it is, as that to be a sin of presumption, when it is but a sin of infirmity, though against light. Fourthly, Our sin, and springing up in us, which is but cast into us by Satan; as thoughts of blasphemy darted into us, which our hearts tremble at and abhor. The weeds that are cast in over the pale into a man's garden, are not the weeds of the garden, till the soil give rooting to them, that is, consent. This is folly, as not judging of ourselves or our sins according to the word, which is the rule of wisdom, Isa. viii. 20; 2 Tim. iii. 17, but according, 1. To our present sense, which in spiritual matters is blind and foolish, and very changeable; 2. To the suggestion of our enemy. This bringeth to untimely death, sometime by violent self-murder, Mat. xxvii. 4. 5.

*Quest.* But how can a man die before his time?

*Ans.* Not before the time which God hath appointed, Job xiv. 5, yet before the time, first, Of the course of nature; secondly, Of our expectation of it; thirdly, Of our preparation for it. Continuance and growth in sin is, first, Foolish, Prov. xiv. 16, and xiii. 9. As utterly against the word, Rom. vi. 1; and as flattering us with empty hopes of impunity, Deut. xxix. 19, and of repentance hereafter.

Secondly, Destructive and deadly before the time, Ps. lxxviii. 21, and lv. 23: 1. Every sin which we commit setting us a step further off from salvation, Ps. cxix. 155; Rom. xiii. 11, (*a pari*;) 2. As kindling a greater fire of God's wrath, and adding more fuel to the fire, Deut. xxix. 19, 20; Amos ii. 13; 3. As hardening the heart more and more unto impenitency, Heb. iii. 34; Rom. ii. 15; 4. As filling a vessel of dishonour the sooner full to the brim, Gen. xv. 16.

*Quest.* But how is this continuance and growth in sin said to be overmuch?

*Ans.* Because the former course of our wickedness may suffice us, 1 Peter iv. 3.

*Use 1.* To dehort from aggravation of sin in any excessive measure above the word, though according to the word it be most wholesome, Ps. xl. 12; Ezra ix. 6.

*Use 2.* To dehort from continuance and growth in sin, Dan. iv. 27; 1 Peter iv. 3. Continuance implieth, first, Repetition of the act after we know it to be sin, Prov. xix. 19; not so Judah, Gen. xxxviii. 26. Secondly, Impenitency after it, only forbearance of the act; which may be feared in Judah, Gen. xxxviii. 26, till after Joseph had humbled, as an instrument in God's hand, him and his brethren. Thirdly, Toleration of the root of it, without mortification of it. Thus Jonah, repenting of his forsaking his call, but not mortifying the pride of his heart, (which was the root of it), brake forth again, Jonah iv. 9. Growth in sin, as when, first, More resolute, Jer. xlv. 16, 17; secondly, More skilful at it, Jer. iv. 22, wise to do evil; thirdly, More bold, Isa. iii. 9; fourthly, More outrageous, proceeding from evil to worse, to higher degrees of wickedness, 2 Tim. iii. 13; Isa. i. 5.

Ver. 18. *It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.*

The two former admonitions in the verses next aforegoing Solomon amplifieth, first, By a motive to the taking hold of them, taken from the goodness thereof. Secondly, By the means whereby we may perform what is required, and eschew the evils dehorted from; and that means is the fear of God. Thirdly, By an argument from the strength and

supportance which this wisdom bringeth to a wise man, above great friends, ver. 19.

*Doct.* 1. It is a good thing to take hold of such admonitions as may keep us from excess either of righteousness or wickedness, or from overmuch either righteousness or wickedness. To take hold—which is done, first, By faith; both, 1. In the word, else it profiteth not, Heb. iv. 2; 2. In the Lord to help us by his strength, both of power, wisdom, and grace, Isa. xxvii. 5. Secondly, By hearty affection, as a precious treasure, Ps. cxix. 11. Thirdly, By caution and circumspection. Here to take heed is to take hold, Acts xvi. 14; Heb. ii. 1; wanting in Jehu, 2 Kings x. 31. Fourthly, By practice; so the word is taken, Prov. ii. 19. It is good not to be over-righteous: first, To prevent the evil of desolation threatened, ver. 16. Desolation signifieth, 1. Solitude, left to a solitary condition; 2. Confusion, as Dan. iv. 19, astonishment; 3. Destruction. Overmuch righteousness bringeth, (1.) Desertion from God, Luke i. 53, and xviii. 9, 14—we first deserting him, Rom. x. 3; desertion from men, Job xxxii. 1; (2.) Confusion through disappointment of a man's end and hopes, Rom. ix. 30–32; (3.) Destruction; for what shall satisfy for former sins and for defects of this righteousness? Secondly, To obtain the contrary solace, 1. Of peace with God, Rom. v. 1; Isa. xxxii. 17; 2. Of establishment and encouragement in ill hours, Isa. xxviii. 16, with 1 Peter ii. 6; 3. Of salvation, Prov. xii. 18. It is good not to be over-wicked, first, To prevent the evils of despair and of untimely death; as also to prevent the evils of continuance and growth in sin, mentioned in ver. 17, page 72. Secondly, To obtain the good, 1. Of hope of possibility of help. It taketh hold of God's strength, Isa. xxvii. 5; Mark i. 40; and it stirreth up to the use of means, Ezra x. 2–4; 2. Of sincere reformation or breaking off the course of sin. First, Prolonging of tranquillity, Dan. iv. 27. Secondly, Finding of mercy, Prov. xxviii. 13.

*Use* 1. To what upon us both these admonitions—to beware both of overmuch righteousness and of overmuch wickedness in all the former particulars.

*Use* 2. To exhort us to grow up and walk on in the fear of God; which might have been handled as a distinct doctrine, being expressly mentioned in the text. The fear of God is a good preservation against

excess both of righteousness and wickedness—against excess of righteousness, Deut. v. 27 with 29; against excess of wickedness, Prov. xvi. 6, xiv. 16, and xxviii. 14; Jer. xxxii. 40.

*Reason* 1. It emptieth a man of self-confidence, Phil. ii. 12, 13.

*Reason* 2. It keepeth the heart soft, Prov. xxviii. 14.

*Reason* 3. To exhort us how to carry ourselves toward wholesome admonitions—to wit, as here Solomon warneth, to take hold of them in all the four particulars specified in opening the meaning of the text, Prov. iv. 13.

Ver. 19. *Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city.*

These words give another reason why we should beware of the folly of sin, and of the overmuch wisdom of excessive righteousness, taken from the safeguard or strong protection and deliverance which this wisdom will procure to a wise man, and that amplified *a minori*, from the less supportance and deliverance which many great friends in court or city might afford him.

*Doct.* The wisdom of an innocent and truly righteous life, will yield a man greater supportance and safer deliverance than many great friends in court or city, Prov. xxiv. 5; Job xxii. 23, 30. For the original text speaketh of this wisdom,—that is, this wisdom whereby a man avoideth both the folly of continuance in sin, ver. 17, and the overmuch wisdom of excessive righteousness, ver. 16, in both of which men nudo or destroy themselves. To this wisdom will strengthen a man more, to wit, by supportance and by deliverance, than ten, that is, many, שליטים, princely lords and friends in the city, meaning the court which resided in the city, and whereto they resorted. Ten often put for many, Num. xiv. 22; Job xix. 3.

*Reason* 1. From the presence and protection of God with such whose ways are pure and upright before him, 2 Chron. xvi. 9; Ps. xviii. 20, 21, 23, 24. God is, first, The light of our countenance, Ps. xlii. 11, and xliii. 5; secondly, The staff of our maintenance, Ps. xvi. 5; thirdly, The horn of our deliverance, Ps. xviii. 2.

*Reason* 2. From the protection and ministry of

angels, who are greater than the greatest men, Ps. xxxiv. 7, and xci. 11, 12; 2 Kings vi. 15–20.

*Reason 3.* From the favour which ways of true righteousness find even of strangers, 1 Pet. iii. 13; Job v. 19–23, even of enemies, Prov. xvi. 7.

*Reason 4.* From the failing of all great friends, when God's hand is heavy upon them; as also in death, when righteousness faileth not, Prov. xi. 4; Ps. cxlvi. 3, 4, and lxxxviii. 18; Job vi. 15–21, and ix. 13.

*Use 1.* To remove the stumbling-block out of the way, which hindereth many from breaking off their sinful courses—to wit, from the loss of their great friends. Nay, the ways of true righteousness procure great friends, by God's overruling hand, Prov. xxii. 11; 2 Kings x. 15, 16. Jehu was but a hypocrite, yet would countenance a good man, and take countenance from him; even wicked princes by persuasion have befriended the church.

*Use 2.* To exhort such private Christians, and the whole state of the country, to walk and grow up in this wisdom: it may be our strength when all else may fail us in city and country, Ps. xxvii. 10, 11.

Ver. 20. *For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.*

Solomon having commended this wisdom, (as strengthening the wise above many great friends in court or city,) whereby a man neither maketh himself over-righteous nor over-wicked, in this verse he giveth a reason of it, taken from the infirmity of the most righteous man upon earth. As who should say, Do not make yourself over-righteous, so righteous as no fault to be found in you. (as Ephraim did, Hosea xii. 8;) for there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

*Doct. 1.* Perfection of righteousness, so as to do good without sin, is not to be found in any man; no, not in the best man upon the earth, 1 Kings viii. 46; Ps. cxxx. 3, and cxliii. 2; Job ix. 3, 30, 31. Clothes defile, as testifying our sinful nakedness, which was the cause of it, Gen. iii. 7. The meaning of the doctrine is, first. That in many things (and in some things more than others) all men, even the best man, do sin, James iii. 2, either omitting good, or committing evil—Noah, Abraham, Lot, Moses, David, Peter. Secondly, That in all

things, in our best actions, we sin something, Neh. xiii. 22; Exod. xxviii. 38; Ps. lxxx. 4; Rev. viii. 3, 4.

*Reason 1.* From God's wise and just desertion of every one of his servants some time or other, for a season; either to know what is in our hearts, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31, or to chasten, first, Our carnal self-confidence, Mat. xxvi. 33, 35, and so to chasten our neglect of stirring up ourselves to lay hold of God, Isa. lxiv. 6, 7; secondly, Our uncircumspect and unjust walking, neglect of pondering the paths of our feet, Ps. cxix. 9; Prov. iv. 26.

*Reason 2.* From the contrary lusting between the flesh and spirit, Gal. v. 17; hence floweth an impossibility of doing any one duty perfectly. Lust in him sinneth, not the person. If rebellious or irregular subjects of confederate princes trespass one upon another, it is not the trespass of the state, whilst the princes condemn it and punish it: now the judgment and will are *Ἡγημονικά* in a man; the carnal part are but as rebellious subjects.

*Use 1.* To refute, 1. Perfection of works held by papists and Catharists of old; and herewith, possibility of keeping the law. 2. Justification by works, Ps. cxliii. 2; Rom. iii. 23, 24. 3. Merit of works. 4. Supererogation. 5. The immaculate perfection of the Virgin Mary, *אדם* in the text, comprehendeth women as well as men, Gen. i. 26, 27.

*Use 2.* To convince carnal wicked men of their abundance of sin, seeing the most godly and just fall, Job xv. 16.

*Use 3.* To shew us where our happiness lieth, to wit, not in our own innocency, but in the covering of our sins, Ps. xxxii. 1, 2; and therefore we seek for all our righteousness in Christ, Phil. iii. 7–9; Rom. iii. 23, 24.

*Use 4.* To mortify pride of our best duties.

*Use 5.* To teach us to bear evils at God's hand patiently, Micah vii. 9.

*Use 6.* Not to be masterly censorious of the failings of our brethren, James iii. 1, 2; John viii. 7.

*Use 7.* To comfort the godly righteous against the fear and grief of death in ourselves, or our Christian friends. In death the spirits of just men are made perfect, Heb. xii. 33; else death were not the last enemy, if sin remained after it, contrary to 1 Cor. xv. 26.

Ver. 21. *Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee.*

Ver. 22. *For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.*

Solomon having observed, ver. 20, that there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not, he hence inferreth this corollary, not to set a man's heart upon all the words that are spoken, not upon all their hard sayings and ill speeches, wherein all men, even the most wise and just, are sometimes to blame, either in speaking or in giving occasion to be spoken.

Parts, two: first, An exhortation not to set our hearts on all the words spoken; that is, 1. Not to listen after them, 1 Sam. xxiv. 9, with 1 Sam. xx. 8-10; 2. Not to be over-deeply affected with them, 1 Sam. xviii. 7, 8; 3. Not to pursue the same with revenge, 2 Sam. xix. 19, 20. Secondly, Confirmation, by reasons two: 1. From the inconveniency which may easily attend it; so a man may hear his own servant cursing him or slighting him, ver. 21. 2. From the conveniency of God's wise and just hand in measuring to us as we have measured to others, which that we have done, Solomon argueth from the testimony of his own conscience, ver. 22.

*Doct.* 1. It is not good to set a man's heart upon all men's speeches of him; no, not upon the hard and slight speeches of his own servants against him, to wit, first, In case men speak vanity, to wit, 1. Out of a vanity of mind, not upon any grounded cause or just occasion, Ps. xii. 2, and cxliv. 8; 2. Vanity of words, that are not likely to weaken a man in his calling, 1 Cor. iv. 3, else Paul stirred if his calling suffered, 2 Cor. x. 10, 11. Secondly, In case the words be spoken by men, whose tongues are their own, whom a man can have no means to restrain, Ps. xxxviii. 12-14. Thirdly, In case of apparent evidence of our innocency to the contrary, Job xxxi. 35-37. Fourthly, In time of public or private, special and weighty, avocation, another way; by humiliation, 2 Sam. xvi. 10, 11, and by rejoicing, 2 Sam. xix. 22. Otherwise it is meet in due time to take notice of any grounded and serious speech that may tend to the prejudice of our calling, and thereby to be stirred up, first, To search our hearts and ways, to see if we have not done the same, or the like evil; secondly, To clear ourselves if innocent, to repent and amend if guilty.

*Reason* 1. From the vanity often found in such

speeches, who take liberty to speak at random, without occasion, without consideration, without any real detriment to ourselves or callings, Ps. lxxiii. 9.

*Reason* 2. From the love and piety we are to bear to men; occasions of enmity and discord we should put out of our minds, Lev. xix. 18.

*Reason* 3. From the office of our memory and heart, which is the treasury of our souls, Mat. xii. 35; and therefore not to be filled with trash, Jer. iv. 14; Luke ii. 51; on the contrary.

*Reason* 4. From the peace and tranquillity of our own spirits, which should not depend upon men's judgments or speeches, but upon God's, 1 Cor. iv. 3; 2 Cor. i. 12.

*Reason* 5. From the privy of our own conscience to our own slight speeches of others, Eccles. vii. 21, 22.

*Use* 1. To teach us this part of the circumcision of the heart and ear, neither, first, To listen with the ear unto all vain speeches of a man's self; secondly, Nor to set the heart thereupon in such a manner as to trouble ourselves and others in vain.

*Use* 2. From the latter reason mentioned in the text, learn we, first, To walk circumspectly in the sight of our own hearts and consciences, else they will bear witness against us, 1 Kings ii. 44; secondly, To be the more patient if others wrong us in the like kind, as our own hearts tell us we have wronged others, Judges i. 6, 7; Mat. vii. 1, 2.

Ver. 23. *All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me.*

Ver. 24. *That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?*

Ver. 25. *I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness.*

In these words Solomon maketh another observation of that which was meet for all men to observe by his example; even what befell himself in the search of wisdom in his own times; which was, first, That in all his search of wisdom, to wit, by the works of creation and providence, and by tracing out happiness in the courses which men are wont to take for it, he found that wisdom was too far off, and too deep for him, ver. 23, 24. Secondly, That

missing of wisdom in the way, he applied his heart, or turned it about, to seek for wisdom in taking account of himself, and seeking to know the wickedness of his own folly, and the foolishness of his own madness, ver. 25. *And the reason of things* is better translated, *and the account of myself* or my ways, &c., ver. 25.

*Doct.* 1. The sense of our vast and deep distances from attaining wisdom by the study of the creatures, and of the vanity of the ways of men, is a just motive to apply our hearts to make diligent search for wisdom in taking account of our own ways, and in the knowledge of the wickedness of our folly, and the foolishness of our own madness. To know, to seek, to search, ver. 25, do all imply a diligent search. The doctrine consisteth of two branches: first, That by the knowledge of the creatures he shall find himself still at a great distance from wisdom, and wisdom more deep than to be digged out of the creatures; secondly, That hereupon Solomon was moved to seek it in looking homewards into his own heart and ways, and the folly and madness and wickedness thereof. The former branch is testified, 1 Cor. i. 21; Rom. i. 21, 22; Job xxviii. 12-14, 20-22.

*Reasons* of the former: 1. From the distance and depth of Christ from the creatures, and from the knowledge of them all. Christ is the wisdom both of God, 1 Cor. i. 24, and of us, 1 Cor. i. 30. But the wisest could never discern Christ by the creature, 1 Cor. ii. 6-9; hence not the creature, but the word is perfect to convert souls, Ps. xix. 1-7.

*Reason* 2. From the aptness of the creature, and the knowledge of it, by reason of the curse that lieth upon it, to puff us up, Isa. xlvii. 10. Solomon confesseth himself, I said I will be wise this way, presuming of his knowledge, text.

Of the latter, that hereupon Solomon was moved to search after wisdom in taking account of himself and the folly of his own course;—

*Reason* 1. From the excellency of man himself. Above all the creatures, he is the lord of them all, and so their lord, Gen. i. 28, 29; and therefore more may be found in observing a man's self, than all the other creatures.

*Reason* 2. From the vanity and vexation of spirit which all the creatures yield to a man. A man is

justly occasioned to look into the root and cause of it in himself.

*Use* 1. To convince all the wise philosophers of the heathens of the vast distance of wisdom from them; for they had no further means of wisdom than what Solomon, improving to the utmost, found far off from conveying true wisdom to him, Rom. i. 22. A warning to scholars not to overvalue wisdom and knowledge which they have from the creatures.

*Use* 2. To teach us that in taking just account of ourselves and our ways we shall find our former course folly, even the wickedness of folly and madness, even the foolishness of madness, 2 Sam. xxiv. 19; Acts xxvi. 11; Job xl. 4, 5, and xlii. 6; Jer. ii. 19; 2 Chron. xvi. 9; Ezek. vi. 9, and xxxvi. 31.

*Use* 3. To teach us a difference of the wisdom of God revealed in the creatures. It is far off and deep, text; not so in the gospel, Deut. xxx. 11-14, with Rom. x. 6, 7.

*Use* 4. To teach us there is much wisdom may be learned from knowing our own wickedness, foolishness, and madness. He was more than a common wise man that said, Prov. xxx. 2, 'Surely I am more foolish than any man;' 1 Cor. iii. 18; Jer. x. 14. For, first, The sense of our own folly and wickedness maketh us low and base, and so humbleth us before the Lord; secondly, The sense of our folly directeth us to seek true wisdom in Christ and in his word.

Ver. 26. *And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.*

Solomon in the three former verses, having observed that in all the former search after wisdom he had not found it in the creature, he therefore applied his heart to seek out by wisdom the wickedness of his own folly, and the foolishness of his own madness. And in these verses, to the end of the chapter, he giveth the church an account both of what he had found upon taking account, and of his want of taking account: to wit, three things—first, An adulterous and idolatrous woman more bitter than death; whom he describeth, 1. By her effects:



(1.) She is as snares slyly to catch ; (2.) Her heart as traps ; (3.) Her hands as bands. 2. By the subject persons about whom she is conversant ; and they are either good in God's sight, and they are delivered from her, or sinners, and they are taken by her, ver. 26. Secondly, The rarity of faithful admonitions amongst men, especially amongst women, ver. 28, which he amplifieth by his diligent and incessant search, ver. 27. Thirdly, The vast distance of a man by his fall from his state of creation, or the vain and sinful fruits of man's fall from the state wherein God created him, ver. 29.

*Doct. 1.* A man that setteth himself unfeignedly, or, to use Solomon's words, that applieth and turneth his heart wisely to search out his own wickedness, folly, and madness, shall find the instruments that led him into temptation and sin more bitter than death, as Solomon here found his wives and concubines, who drew him to maintenance of idolatry, 1 Kings xi. 3, 4.

*Reason 1.* From the shame and indignity put upon him by his wives and concubines, that were idolaters, pleading, it seemeth, liberty of conscience ; whence he first granteth toleration, then countenance and assistance to their idols, erecting temples to them ; whence altars, ornaments, priest, and all upon mount Olivet, before the face of the Lord in his temple, 1 Kings xi. 7, 8 ; 2 Kings xxiii. 13.

*Reason 2.* From the bitterness of sin, and that even above death, Jer. ii. 19 ; Acts viii. 23 ; Dent. xxxii. 32, 33. All the ingredients of bitterness are found in sin, which have made men bitterly to mourn : as, first, The loss of the blessing of a heavenly Father, Gen. xxvii. 34, *a minori* ; secondly, Cruel bondage, worse than Egyptian, Exod. i. 14 ; thirdly, Bitter water causing the curse, Num. v. 24. Yea, sin is more bitter than death : as, first, Being the death of the soul, Rom. vii. 11, which is so much the more bitter than the death of the body, as the life of the soul is more sweet and precious than the life of the body ; secondly, Depriving us of the presence and favour of God, which is better than life, Isa. lix. 2 ; Ps. lxiii. 3.

*Reason 3.* From the bitterness of godly sorrow or repentance, Mat. xxvi. 75 ; Zech. xii. 10. Matters of such bitterness in godly sorrows : first, For that we have pierced our dearest and best friends, Zech.

xii. 10. Secondly, That by sin we have destroyed the beauty and strength, 1. Of family, as of our firstborn or only child ; 2. Of church and commonwealth, as in the mourning for Josiah at Hadadrimmon, Zech. xii. 10, 11. Hence, Lam. iii. 15, with 2 Chron. xxxv. 25, Solomon could not but see in his fall the division of the kingdom, 1 Kings xi. 40. Hence corruption of religion in them, then in Judah also, to the utter destruction of all.

*Use 1.* To teach us concerning Solomon, first That Solomon did indeed repent after his fall secondly, That he wrote this book after his repentance.

*Use 2.* To wean all men from sin ; it will be bitterness in the end, 2 Sam. ii. 26 ; Acts viii. 23 ; Prov. xxiii. 31, 32, v. 34, 35, and xx. 17.

*Use 3.* To wean us from delighting in sinful companions ; they will be bitter to us in the end as death, and more bitter too. Trust not in the friendship of such ; for if ever they or we repent, we shall be ready to condemn and betray one another.

*Use 4.* To teach us a sign of true repentance, when sin groweth as bitter, yea, more bitter to us than death.

*Use 5.* To shew us the danger of women once corrupted, how apt, and sly, and strong they be to draw on stronger than themselves to corruption, Neh. xiii. 26.

*Use 6.* To be upright in God's sight, and not to rest in a sinful state and course. The one is preserved from such women and snares ; the other given up to be taken by her.

Ver. 27. *Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account.*

Ver. 28. *Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not : one man among a thousand have I found ; but a woman among all those have I not found.*

Solomon here inferreth the manner and nature of the account which he took of his own wickedness and folly, which he describeth by three adjuncts or qualities : first, That it was exact and particular, one by one ; secondly, that it was constant and continual—which still my soul seeketh ; thirdly, That it was defective—which still my soul seeketh, but I find not.

*Doct. 1.* The account which a penitent soul taketh

of his wickedness and folly is a particular and constant account, and yet defective. Particular account, Lam. iii. 40 ; Zeph. ii. 1, where one part of the sense is fan yourselves ; Ps. li. 5, original sin ; ver. 10, a foul heart, adulterous ; ver. 14, bloodguiltiness ; murder, Ezek. vi. 9 ; Zeph. iii. 11. Constant and growing account, Ps. cxix. 59, with cxxxix. 23, 24. Defective account, Ps. xix. 12, and xxxviii. 4.

*Reason of particular account :* 1. From the illumination of conscience, especially when it is wakened to repentance, Prov. xx. 27. God dealeth with his servants when he humbleth them, as with carnal men ; he entereth into judgment with them, Ps. cxliiii. 2, and x. 15. Conscience enlightened and awakened, sits as it were God's vicegerent in the soul, who, in his judicial proceeding, is exact and particular, Mat. xii. 36 ; Eccles. xii. 14 ; Ps. xc. 8.

*Reason of constant account :* 1. From the sweetness of godly sorrow, 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10 ; the deeper the sweeter ; and sorrow is the deeper and greater, by how much deeper the search is. As in bodily wounds, the deeper search into old sores, the greater pain to the body.

*Reason of defective account :* 1. From the deep deceitfulness of our hearts, Jer. xvii. 9 ; 2. From the innumerable multitude of our sins, Ps. xl. 12, and xix. 12 ; 3. From the imperfection of all our best knowledge of spiritual good and evil things, 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

*Use 1.* To reprove our overly and slippery conceit of perfect accounts. Many are loath to enter into any account at all, like bankrupt merchants, or if they do, it is but overly, Jer. viii. 6 ; they that do are loath to pursue it constantly—soon slip from it. The papists require a perfect examination of all particular mortal sins, as they call them, with all the circumstances of them.

*Use 2.* To teach us, after Solomon's example, what manner of account-books we should keep between the Lord and our souls ; to wit,

First, Exact and particular. Motives: 1. It prevents God's examining and judging us, when we are strict in examining and judging ourselves, 1 Cor. xi. 28, 31. 2. It will make our, first, Repentance more thorough and sincere ; secondly, Prayers more fervent and humble ; thirdly, Christ more precious and glorious ; Fourthly, Mortification more powerful ; fifthly, Heart

more watchful ; sixthly, Life more regular, Ps. cxix. 39. 3. It will leave the conscience, first, More peaceable. Sin unaccounted of, will be like a debt unreckoned, and terrify, or at least trouble, the conscience, Ps. xxv. 7 ; Job xiii. 26. Secondly, More pure ; sin unaccounted for is unpretended, and like a Canaanite, will let in the devil at the back-door ; as Jonah, that repented of disobedience to God's call, but not of the pride of his heart, the cause of it, hence he is passionate again for disgrace, chap. iv. 1.

Or the second and third may be put together, as a motive from the benefit redounding, first, To ourselves, in our consciences, hearts, and lives ; secondly, To our duties, in our repentance, prayers, and mortification ; thirdly, To Christ.

Secondly, Constant motives : 1. Else our hearts will grow hard and barren, and full of lusts and passions, as the soil but once ploughed will grow fallow, and barren of good fruit, but abounding in weeds.

Thirdly, Sensible of its own defectiveness.

*Motives.*—1. It will call in for a higher search, even from God himself, without fear and terror, Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. 2. It will stir up to prayer for pardon of secret sins, Ps. xix. 12.

*Use 3.* To teach us the right way of judging and admonishing others without arrogance or hypocrisy. Solomon here passeth a deep censure upon men and women, ver. 28 ; but before this he taketh a strict account of himself. This method is needful to reckon first with ourselves, Mat. vii. 5.

*One man, &c.—Doct.* 1. There is a great scarcity of men, worthy the name of men, or acquitting themselves like men, and greater scarcity of women worthy of the name of women ; and kings of all men, especially penitent kings, have most cause to say so. Or, There is a great scarcity of good men, and a greater scarcity of good women, especially about the court. For Solomon speaketh of what himself found : One man among a thousand have I found, which argueth a great scarcity of men ; and surely he doth not mean that men for the most part are no men, but not good men, not such as are worthy the name of men, that acquit themselves like men, as they should, according to 1 Cor. xvi. 13, in our several relations and employments, 2 Sam. x. 12 ;

see the like phrase, Prov. xviii. 22. So, 1 Chron. vi. 10, Jehoiada or Azariah, (either of both, for the Holy Ghost giveth liberty to understand either,) *sacerdotium egit*—executed the priest's office. Why, did not their predecessors and successors execute the same office? True, but not with like priestly wisdom, courage, zeal, faithfulness. There is such a like phrase in Job xxxiii. 23: 'one of a thousand, to declare to a man his righteousness,' and so his failing and falling short of it; that is a faithful admonisher of the scarcity of faithful men, David, a courtier, complaineth, Ps. xii. 1; Prov. xxxi. 10.

*Reasons of few men:* 1. From the paucity of the elect, Mat. xx. 16. And if not elect, then not effectually called; and then, Christ not being united to us, we are still full of selfishness, self-conceit, self-will, self-seeking.

*Reason 2.* From the hardness and straitness of the gate and ways of righteousness, with the contrary liberty and ease of the gate and ways of sin and death, Mat. vii. 13, 14.

*Reason 3.* From the variety of the changes of relations wherein a man stands. A man that is a good servant, if he become a church member, he can despise his master, whether he be carnal, because such, or a brother, because then equal in Christ. Hence 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.

*Reason of fewer women:* 1. From the greater liability to deceit and temptation, 1 Tim. ii. 14.

*Reason 2.* From their greater vehemency and impotency in their passions and lusts, not only on good objects, 2 Sam. i. 26, but on evil also, 1 Kings xxi. 25.

*Reason 3.* From their great superstition, Acts xiii. 50; 2 Tim. iii. 6, 7. This Solomon found by experience.

*Reasons of fewest in court:* 1. From the greatest paucity and rarity of great men called, 1 Cor. i. 26.

*Reason 2.* From the affected liberty of great men especially, Jer. v. 5.

*Reason 3.* From the self-seeking of flattery, frequent in courtiers, Hosea vii. 3, 5; 2 Chron. xxiv. 17; 1 Kings xxii. 13.

*Reason 4.* From the temptations that follow the court: immunity from controlment, Amos vii. 13; Isa. xxx. 10; impunity from the hand of justice. The court is commonly made a sanctuary for iniquity.

*Use 1.* To refute the papists' note of the church, multitudes; not one of a thousand. More Mohammedans than Christians of all sorts.

*Use 2.* To dissuade men from blessing themselves in leading such a life as most men lead, Exod. xxiii. 2. Scarcity of good store of company in good ways is no just discouragement from walking in them; yet with this caution, not therefore to neglect the multitude of the godly, whether in matters of judgment or practice, 1 Cor. xiv. 36, and xi. 16.

*Use 3.* To humble both men and women for this scarcity of goodness amongst us. See how low sin debaseth! We are not worthy of the name of men and women by reason thereof, Prov. xxx. 2; Ps. xlix. 20, and lxxiii. 22; 1 Cor. xv. 32; Eccles. iii. 18. Grace maketh us like to angels, yea, to God himself—amongst men, one of a thousand; but sin maketh us rather beasts than men. Not one man scarce of a thousand, or woman, that quit themselves well in all their relations.

*Use 4.* To wean us from affecting to live in the court; where, of all places, goodness is most rare. God threatened preferment in a great court for a great plague, 2 Kings xx. 18.

*Use 5.* To teach good men and good women especially to be the more thankful that God should shew us such special grace and favour, as to pass by thousands, and call us to goodness. Universal righteousness endoweth us with rare excellency, such as is scarce found in a thousand.

Ver. 29. *Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.*

In this verse we have set down the third experiment or event which Solomon found upon taking account of his own wickedness and folly; to wit, the righteousness of God in his work about man, but man's perverse subtlety in inventing ways of back-sliding, or apostasy from God.

*Quest.* 1. How doth he say he found this only, seeing he found two other things before? First, The bitterness of wicked women, ver. 26; secondly, The scarcity of good men, and greater scarcity of good women, ver. 18.

*Ans.* By only is meant chiefly, as Joshua i. 7, 8; Gal.

ii. 10; Prov. iv. 3; with 1 Chron. iii. 5; Cant. vi. 9.

*Quest.* 2. How is God said to make man righteous?

*Ans.* Righteous, first, In his first creation, Gen. i. 26, 27; secondly, His own children, such as himself and his father before him, in their regeneration, Jer. ii. 1.

*Quest.* What is meant by inventions, and man's seeking them out?

*Ans.* Inventions are translated engines, 2 Chron. xxvi. 25, as slings to offend the enemy, and bulwarks to defend ourselves. Seeking out these, argueth a perverse diligence to deal subtly in inventing ways of corrupting ourselves.

*Doct.* 1. A penitent soul, taking good account of his wickedness and folly, shall evidently and eminently find the righteousness of God in all his work upon us, and the perverseness and subtlety of our inventions to corrupt ourselves, even from our first parents to this day. Evidently: for lo, or behold, saith he. Eminently: for, saith he, This only, or chiefly, or eminently, have I found. Inventions: he meaneth no profitable inventions for the good of themselves or others, as arts, or manufactures, or occupations; but such inventions whereby we seek to start away from God, and to corrupt ourselves. As some horses put into a good pasture, yet will seek round about the fence to find a gap to range out. Thus Moses taught backsliding Israel, Deut. xxxi. 19, to see God's righteousness, Deut. xxxii. 4; their own perverseness, Deut. xxxii. 5, 15; Neh. ix. 33; Job xxxiii. 27, 28: God made Adam righteous at first, Gen. i. 26, 27; to wit, first, In knowledge, Col. iii. 10, giving him a right understanding of things; secondly, In holiness and righteousness, setting his heart and affections upon their proper objects, Eph. iv. 24. Right: first, As suitable to the righteous law of God, which is a straight and right rule, Ps. xvi. 8. As setting the inferior parts of the soul and whole man in a right order to the superior; will to the judgment or conscience; affections to the will, Prov. xvi. 32; outward members to both, Rom. vi. 13; all to God, Rom. vi. 13; all which are now disordered and perverted, Ps. cxxv. 4, 5. Thirdly, As being in a state well pleasing to God; right in God's sight, 2 Chron. xxix. 2.

*Reason* of God so making us at first. The justice and holiness of God required it of himself, that if he create man to a spiritual and supernatural end—to wit, fellowship with himself—and require of him obedience to a spiritual and holy law to lead him to that end, that then he should lift him up above his reason to a holy estate by original righteousness; otherwise from his first creation he had been made sinful and crooked.

*Reason* of reforming man to a state of righteousness: the praise of the glory of his grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, Eph. ii. 4, 5.

*Reasons* of man seeking inventions: 1. From the liberty of will God left man unto, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

*Reason* 2. From the forwardness not to rest satisfied in the condition God had provided for him; but he would be active to improve his condition by his own wit and strength. Adam and all his posterity made righteous, sought out many inventions to fall off from God. Eve, and by her persuasion Adam, invented a way to get wisdom in the knowledge of good and evil, Gen. ii. 6. Solomon's wives invented many wiles to draw him to tolerate them in the liberty of their religion. Solomon himself invented many devices how to satisfy himself in satisfying them. Conscience is tender; faith is the gift of God. His father David compelled no pagans to circumcision. His subjects invented many shifts to put off from themselves the faithfulness of a wholesome advertisement to Solomon. The common people put it off to the nobles, the nobles to the priests, the priests to the prophets; the prophets excused themselves by the king's transcendent wisdom above them, Eccles. viii. 1. So David before him sought many inventions to cloak his sin with Bathsheba.

*Reason* of finding this as chiefly grievous to a penitent soul, from the proper nature of repentance, which is deepliest affected with sin as it is, first, Most dishonourable to God; secondly, Most injurious to the grace of Christ, contrary to means and mercies, and pernicious to the church of Christ; thirdly, Committed with the greatest perverseness and foolish subtlety of our own hearts.

*Use* 1. To refute the popish doctrine that original righteousness in Adam by creation was wholly

supernatural, and given by free grace. But then Adam had been right without it, in which he was not, but right by it. It was indeed, first, Supernatural, as not flowing from the principles of nature: a man is a perfect man without it for substance; secondly, As not deserving by men who had done neither good nor evil.

Secondly, Natural, as due, first, To the purity of God's nature to make us so perfect; secondly, To the integrity of man's nature, without which he was not so perfect in qualities as were meet for God's pure nature to make. The papists herein extol the freeness of grace to Adam, not to magnify the grace of God, but to derogate from the grace of Christ. For if nature were entire and perfect without God's image, then the want of it in corrupt nature is no sin, but natural to man; and so original sin depraving nature, and requiring necessity of a new birth in Christ, is no sin, but suitable to right nature; and so original sin is no sin, not only after baptism, but even before baptism. But concupiscence is not of God's work in nature, 1 John ii. 16.

*Obj.* Concupiscence and rebellion of the lower parts of the soul against the higher is natural; for the man being made of a body and a soul, must needs be carried both to spiritual and sensual objects. And so this rebellion and stirring of the one part against the other will be found to arise from the principles of pure nature.

*Ans.* The body may affect sensual objects, and the soul spiritual, and both without sin, in subordination of sensual things to spiritual, and of both to God.

*Use 2.* To teach us a true sign of repentance, never to blame God for our falls, but our own perverse subtlety. God made us right, and the regenerate twice right; and his work hath been upright to usward, in leaving us to our falls; we provoked him to it by our self-fulness. But it is we that have perverted our ways, and took pains—sought out devices and cunning inventions—to do wickedly. Yea, this finding out, our own perverse subtlety in seeking out inventions to depart from God, and deceive ourselves, should more deeply affect and afflict us, than all other evils besides; this bringing forth most dishonour to God, injury and abuse to the gifts and graces of Christ, and corruption of nature to ripeness and perfection.

*Use 3.* To teach us to loathe all evil inventions, Rom. i. 30. It is a fruit of a reprobate mind, ver. 28, with 30; such are inventors of fashions, oaths, lusts, and torments.

*Use 4.* To exhort us not to think ourselves right till we attain that estate wherein God made us at first; and that with greater contentment in it than he took, lest we seek, as he did, many inventions.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

*Ver. 1.* *Who is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.*

*Ver. 2.* *I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God.*

*Ver. 3.* *Be not hasty to go out of his sight; stand not in an evil thing, for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.*

*Ver. 4.* *Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?*

*Ver. 5.* *Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.*

The former chapter Solomon ended with a complaint of the inventions which men (though made righteous) are wont to seek out, both to lead themselves into sin and to excuse themselves from holy duty, either of pure worship to God, or faithful love to a brother fallen into sin; who, being fallen, might after be healed by wise and faithful admonition, but that all sorts of men are wont to seek out many inventions to excuse themselves from that unwelcome office, as they count it. It was said above, that mean men put it off to nobles, nobles to the priests, the priests to the prophets, the prophets, and indeed generally all the sorts of Solomon's loyal subjects, put it off by the inventions which here, in these words, Solomon both propoundeth and refuteth.

*Invention 1.* From Solomon's eminency of wisdom, together with the unsearchable depth of his counsels and proceedings, which were so deep as they were not able to search out the bottom, the meaning or interpretation of them: Who is as the man, (that is, as Solomon,) the wise man? 1 Kings iv. 31; and

who knoweth the interpretation (the reason or meaning) of his matters? Our ignorance and weakness, might his subjects say, will dash us out of countenance when we speak to him.

*Refutation* 1. From the power of wisdom even in a mean man, (as Adam is here meant, as also in Ps. xlix. 2,) wisdom maketh his face to shine; secondly, From the change of the strength or boldness of his face, which may be referred either to the former antecedent, and then it is meant the wise man's face, that is, Solomon's face; the boldness or strength of it, as the word signifieth, shall be changed upon a wise and just admonition or presentment of his sin before him, as Dan. v. 6. Or else it may be referred to the strength and boldness of a mean man's face, which shall be doubled, as the word also signifieth, in speaking upon just ground, in humble and discreet manner, even to the king himself, as 2 Sam. xii. 7.

*Invention* 2. Taken from the loyalty and submission of subjects to such great princes. I am to observe, for so it is in the original, the mouth of the king, and that in regard of the oath of God, ver. 2—to wit, the oath of allegiance. As who should say, It is not for me to inquire and dispute of matters of state, princes' commands, but to observe and do what I am commanded. If Solomon command masons and carpenters to build temples to his wives' idols, and the nobles to oversee the work, and all his subjects to contribute to it, it is not for me to gainsay, but to obey. My oath of allegiance binds me far.

*Refutation*. Be not hasty to go out of his sight, that is, out of the king's sight, to execute every commandment which he putteth upon thee. Joab went slowly out from the presence of king David in such a case, 2 Sam. xxiv. 3, 4. Stand not in an evil thing, as they do that perform the works of sinners, Ps. i. 1; for the king doth many times, not according to what is right and well-pleasing in the sight of God, but whatsoever pleaseth himself, ver. 3.

*Invention* 3. From the power and uncontrollable authority of the king's commands, and the danger of such as shall resist or speak against them, especially to his face. Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou? ver. 4.

*Refutation*, First, From the safety of attending God's commandment rather than man's: 'Whoso keepeth the commandment, shall feel no evil thing,' ver. 5. Secondly, From the discretion of a wise man's heart to observe both time and judgment, that is, a judicious and right manner in dealing with the king or any other great one, ver. 5.

That these words are thus to be taken by way of objection and answer, or invention and refutation, appeareth, first, Partly by the coherence with the former chapter; secondly, Partly from the unseasonableness of the preacher otherwise, if he should here extol his own transcendent wisdom and sovereign power, when he is declaring and confessing his deepest penitential sorrows, from ver. 26 to the end of the foregoing chapter.

*Doct*. It is not the eminency of the king's person and wisdom, nor the depths of the king's counsels and proceedings, nor the loyalty and sworn allegiance of the subjects, nor the sovereign authority and power of the commands of princes, nor any such like other invention, that can excuse subjects from admonishing princes, according to our callings, of their grievous falls into notorious scandals; for Solomon here removeth and refuteth all these excuses as vain inventions, 2 Sam. xii. 1–12; 1 Chron. xxi. 3, 4, and vi. 10; 1 Kings xviii. 17, 18, xx. 42, and xxi. 20–24; 2 Kings i. 16; 2 Chron. xvi. 7–9, and xix. 2; 2 Kings v. 13.

*Obj*. Job xxxiv. 18.

*Ans*. There is no colour for an objection if the words were not much corrupted in the translation. The original readeth it thus: That saith to a king, Thou art wicked; and to princes, Ye are ungodly; where Elihu useth it as an argument to justify God's righteousness, because he accepted no man's person—no, nor prince.

*Reasons*. First, From the vanity of all such pretences as might seem to excuse us from this duty, as, 1. The transcendent wisdom and depth of some princes above their poor subjects. *Ans*. First, The wisest are not always wise, Job xxxii. 9—great men, to wit, great in wisdom and power. Solomon sometimes saw his own madness, Eccles. vii. 25.

Secondly, Wisdom in a mean person will make his face shine—that is, make it, 1. Amiable, Num. vi. 25, 26; 2. Honourable and glorious, Acts vi. 15; 3. Reverend and awful, as Exod. xxxiv. 30. Thirdly,

From the falling of a bold and stern spirit before a wise reproof; for so I rather take it, because the word is ever taken in ill part, as, 1. For sternness, Deut. xxviii. 50; Isa. xxxiii. 19; Dan. viii. 23; 2. Impudency and rude boldness, Prov. vii. 13; 3. Hardness and obstinacy, Prov. xxi. 29. Thus fell the countenance of David before Nathan; of Saul before Jonathan, 1 Sam. xix. 4-6; of Ahab before Elijah, 1 Kings xxi. 27; of Felix before Paul, Acts xxiv. 25. Or if the strength of the king's countenance change not, thine shall be doubled, 1 Kings xxii. 18, 19; Dan. iii. 13, 16.

2. The loyalty of an obedient subject, and that ratified by oath, ver. 2. *Ans.* First, Yet there may be too much haste in obeying, Esther iii. 15; Dan. ii. 13, 15; as when kings command, 1. For trial, 1 Kings iii. 24, 25; 2. With change of mind, Dan. vi. 14; 3. Unlawful things; which to obey will breed smart, first, From God's hand; secondly, From man's, Hosea v. 11; Dan. vi. 24. Secondly, Obedience is only due in the Lord, Eph. vi. 1, not against him, Acts iv. 19. Thirdly, An oath and God's name in it bindeth not to sin against God, but rather the contrary.

3. The sovereign power and uncontrollable authority of princes, ver. 4. *Ans.* First, God's commandment and the keeping of it is a preservative from evil, ver. 5; he is higher than princes, Eccles. v. 8; Prov. xxi. 1. Secondly, A wise man's heart will observe a right time and manner, ver. 5; so did Abigail, 1 Sam. xxv. 36, 37; and Nathan, 2 Sam. xii. 1-14.

*Reason* 2. From the duty we owe, first, To God, the King of kings; secondly, To the king by covenant; thirdly, To the peace of the church and commonwealth.

*Use* 1. To exhort subjects to be faithful in admonishing magistrates when God leaveth them to scandalous falls, and giveth us a call to it; which they do, 1. When they call us to execute their sinful commands, as 1 Chron. xxi. 3, 4; 2. When by our place we are to watch over them, Ezek. iii. 17-21; 3. When they are not the sons of Belial, nor dogs, nor swine, but will hear us attending upon them, 1 Sam. xxv. 17; Mat. vii. 6; 2 Kings v. 13. Fear not the stiffness of their faces, Ezek. ii. 6, nor their wisdom, power, will.

*Use* 2. To teach us the best ornament of the face. It is not jewels, nor laces, nor painting, but wisdom, that makes the face to shine, ver. 1.

*Use* 3. To teach great men to let their countenance fall at any just admonition: 'The strength of his face shall be changed,' ver. 1.

*Use* 4. To teach a lawful use of an oath of fidelity and subjection to magistrates, ver. 2.

*Use* 5. To forbear haste in executing magistrates' commands, unless it be in lawful and expedient matters, ver. 3. Serve not kings' pleasures in evil. Doeg herein did wickedly, 1 Sam. xxii. 18; the Egyptian midwives better, Exod. i. 16, 17; and the guard of Saul, 1 Sam. xxii. 16, 17, and xiv. 44, 45.

*Use* 6. The sovereignty of princes leaveth them scarce any faithful friends or admonitors: scarce one of a thousand, ver. 5. See the misery of sovereignty.

*Use* 7. To encourage to walk in the path of God's commandments. From the indemnity and safety of such a course, ver. 5, Moses felt no harm from Pharaoh, nor Samuel from Saul, nor Nathan from David, nor Elijah from Ahab, nor Jehu from Jehoshaphat, nor Amos from Amaziah.

*Obj.* But Hanani did from Asa, 2 Chron. xvi. 10; Zechariah from Joash, 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21; Uriah from Jehoiakim, Jer. xxvi. 23; John from Herod, Mark vi. 27; Stephen from the high priests, Acts vii. 51-59.

*Ans.* First, God doth often prevent such evil entertainment of the faithfulness of his servants; secondly, If they suffer imprisonment, banishment, death for God's commandment, it is no evil, but a crown of martyrdom.

Ver. 5. *A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.*

These words are a second answer to the third invention which Solomon's subjects made to excuse themselves for dealing faithfully with him in some good of admonition, when he was falling into this great sin of harkening to his wives in the toleration, yea, and maintenance, of their idolatrous religion.

The invention or excuse was taken from the sovereignty and uncontrollable power and authority of princes, and the danger of opposing them, though but in word, in their way, ver. 4. Whereto Solomon answereth, and opposeth, first, The safety of obedi-

ence to the commandment of God : ' Whoso keepeth the commandment, shall feel no evil thing.' Secondly, The discretion of a wise man's heart in so observing the fit time and season, and the manner and way of an admonition, as might prevent all danger in dispensing of it even to a king or any other superior ; and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment, ver. 5. Thirdly, The insufficiency of retaining our own life by retaining the king's favour, Eccles. viii. 8.

*Time*, that is, a fit season of an admonition.

*Judgment*, that is, the manner, order, or way of it, as the word is translated, 1 Sam. viii. 11.

*Doct.* A wise man's heart doth so well discern the time and manner of an admonition, as that he may dispense it safely, though it were to a superior, even to a king, 1 Sam. xxv. 3, 36, 37, and xix. 4-6 ; 2 Sam. xii. 1-12 ; Dan. iv. 27.

*Quest.* When is the fit time or season of an admonition, especially of superiors ?

*Ans.* 1. When we are called on to be the instruments in sin, as Joab to David, 1 Chron. xxi. 2, 3 ; secondly, When they come to us for counsel, in the same or other matters, 1 Kings xiv. 1-16 ; thirdly, When others are in danger to be corrupted, unless present witness be born against the sin, Gal. ii. 13, 14 ; fourthly, When neither admonisher nor admonished are distempered with passion, nor prejudice, nor any choking impediment ; but rather God offereth an opportunity by some word of favour or encouragement, 1 Sam. xxv. 36, 37 ; Esther vii. 2-4. We must hazard our favours for the service of God and his people.

*Quest.* 2. What is the fit manner, or order, or way of dispensing an admonition ?

*Ans.* According to certain rules, whereof some concern, first, The person admonishing ; secondly, The person admonished ; thirdly, The offence for which admonition is given ; fourthly, The admonition itself.

1. *Rules* concerning the admonisher : 1. The admonisher should have a calling to it, through some relation between himself and the offender. As we find it in all kinds of relations, first, A minister, 2 Sam. xii. 1-12 ; secondly, A counsellor, 2 Sam. xix. 5-7 ; thirdly, A yoke-fellow, husband, Job ii. 10 ; wife, 1 Sam. xxv. 36, 37 ; fourthly, A son, 1

Sam. xix. 4 ; fifthly, A servant, 2 Kings v. 13 ; sixthly, A subject, Dan. iv. 27 ; seventhly, A brother, Rev. i. 9 ; Col. iv. 17 ; eighthly, A friend, Prov. xxvii. 5, 6. Yea, a stranger travelling by the way and seeing his fellow-traveller sin, he hath as good a calling to help him up, as if himself or his beast were fallen ; the relation of a companion requireth it. 2. He should be furnished with love to the offender, Lev. xix. 17 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 14. 3. He should first admonish, judge, and cleanse himself, Mat. vii. 5 ; Rom. ii. 1.

2. *Rules* concerning the admonished : first, They should not be scorers, Prov. ix. 7-9 ; Hosea iv. 4 ; Mat. vii. 6, but such as may be capable of reformation. Secondly, Brethren, especially to be admonished, yea, though excommunicate, whilst there is hope, 2 Thes. iii. 15 ; else, if wedded to his sin, let him alone, Hosea iv. 17. And of brethren, difference to be made, first, Of spirits : some are more sluggish, they to be admonished more sharply, Titus i. 12 ; Jude 23 ; some more tender, they to be admonished with more meekness, Gal. vi. 1 ; Jude 22. Secondly, Of years and place : 1. Men of greater years and place rather exhorted than reprov'd, 1 Tim. v. 1 ; Dan. iv. 27 ; 2. Inferiors with more liberty and plainness. Thirdly, Any man capable of hearing or bearing a word of admonition.

3. *Rules* concerning the sins admonished : first, They must be certainly known and convinced, 1 Cor. v. 1 ; Mat. xviii. 15 ; we may not reprove upon a suspicion, 1 Cor. xiii. 5,\* nor upon our own inquisition ; it is as if I should say, Let me put my finger in your eyes to feel if there be not a mote ; nor upon any uncertain hearsay, Isa. xi. 3. Secondly, A difference must be put between motes and beams, gnats and camels, Mat. xxiii. 24. Camels and beams may not be admonished with gentle reproofs, 1 Sam. ii. 23, 24.

4. *Rules* concerning the admonition of itself : first, It should be dispensed in most wholesome words, such as may be most fit to gain a sinner and heal his soul. Wholesome gaining words are, first, General terms, especially at first, and against precious and gainful sins, and dangerous to be openly rebuked, Acts xix. 36, 37. Secondly, Clothed in parable, 2 Sam. xii. 1-3, &c. A garment is best seen how it becometh us on another man's back. Thirdly, De-



livered in Scripture phrase, that the offender may see God reproving him in his own words, rather than man, Mat. xv. 7-9. Fourthly, Such as acknowledge some good where it is, as well as see faults, Rev. ii. 2-4; pills would be given in sugar. Secondly, In order. Less sins would be first reprov'd; John first reprov'd Herod for less matters, Mark vi. 20, before he came to the matter of Herodias. *Vada prius pertentanda*, Jer. xii. 5.

*Reason* of the doctrine: from a wise man's self-denial; hence God guideth and blesseth him, Prov. iii. 5-7.

*Use* 1. To instruct us in this great and difficult, yet most necessary, duty of love, admonition; to neglect it wholly is a hatred of our brother in our heart, Lev. xix. 17. All the excuses of it are sinful inventions. To tell others of it, not themselves, is a slander and malice, Prov. xxvi. 28; to admonish offenders themselves, not in fit time and manner, is to spill the admonition, to take an ordinance in vain.

*Use* 2. To teach the admonished to take such a duty in good part, as a precious balm, Ps. cxli. 5, as a jewel or golden earring, Prov. xxv. 12.

Ver. 6. *Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him.*

Ver. 7. *For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?*

Solomon had in the former verse given it as one means of safety to a subject, in admonishing his prince going astray, to wit, a wise man's heart discerning both time and judgment, the fit season and fit manner of such a duty. In these words he amplifieth this fit time and judgment by the universality of the subject, to which time and judgment is fitted; and that is, to every purpose or business, and he meaneth every lawful and good purpose or business; for there is no time nor manner fit to commit sin. Whence he inferreth as a corollary, that the misery of man is great upon him; and withal he giveth the reason why such great misery falleth upon men in respect of the time and judgment fitted to every action, taken from man's ignorance of that time and judgment, which he expresseth both by a man's own ignorance thereof, and by other men's unfitnes to

tell him, ver. 7: Who shall tell him for the time when it shall be, or for the manner how it shall be? The word signifieth both. The words afford three observations, which we may handle in order, and make use of them together.

*Doct.* 1. To every lawful purpose and business there is a fit time and manner for the doing of it. For persons, Acts xiii. 36, 25; for thoughts, 1 Kings v. 5, with 2 Sam. vii. 3; for words, Prov. xxv. 11; for actions, Ps. xxxii. 6; Isa. lv. 6; John ii. 4, 7, 8.

*Reason* 1. From the sovereignty of God to appoint times and seasons, Acts xvii. 7.

*Reason* 2. From the beauty of everything in its time, Eccles. iii. 11.

*Reason* 3. From the necessity of the concurrence of all due circumstances to make an action good, 2 Sam. xvii. 7; 2 Kings v. 26.

*Doct.* 2. Men ordinarily are ignorant of the time and manner of doing any business, especially spiritually good, ver. 7. As the Hebrew renders it—to wit, what that time should be, and how or after what manner it should be, Eccles. ix. 12; 2 Cor. iii. 5; Jer. x. 23. The text speaketh chiefly of ordinary men, not of the godly wise; for the wise know time and judgment, ver. 5, but ordinary men, they neither know time and judgment themselves, nor do others tell them. Ordinary men consult with men like themselves, who mislead them, 1 Kings xii. 8.

*Reason* 1. From the want of the inward light of the image of God, they are darkness, John i. 5; Eph. v. 8.

*Reason* 2. They are self-confident and full, walking without counsel, Prov. xiv. 16, and xxviii. 26.

*Reason* 3. If they consult, it is not with God, Isa. xxx. 1, 2; Ps. x. 4; nor with his word, and then no light, Isa. viii. 20; but with foolish and wicked men like themselves, 1 Kings xii. 8.

*Doct.* 3. For want of discerning and observing fit time and manner, the misery of man is great upon him, ver. 6; Gen. xxvii. 12-24, with xxxi. 40, 41; 1 Sam. viii. 5-18, and xiii. 8-13; 2 Kings v. 26, 27; 1 Kings xii. 7, 19; 2 Chron. xxxv. 22-24.

*Reason* 1. From God's delight and good pleasure to vouchsafe his presence, his concurrence, and his blessing, when actions are done in God's time, and

after his manner, Ps. xxxii. 6; Isa. lv. 6; and his refusal thereof, when otherwise, Num. xiv. 42; 1 Sam. xiii. 13; Heb. xii. 17.

*Reason 2.* From the snare and net that lieth upon men in every action done out of due time and manner, Eccles. ix. 12; 2 Chron. xxxv. 22-24, with Lam. iv. 20. Crosses may befall a man in the best actions; but snares, inextricable difficulties, befall men only in evil ways, and good things done out of due time and manner.

*Use 1.* To teach us to discern and observe not only our words and all our ways, but even the fit time and manner of them, as we do desire to be freed of the great misery that else may befall us. Jacob sought the blessing out of due time and manner; it cost him twenty years hard service; and his mother, that counselled him amiss, never lived to see him again. The Israelites sought a king out of due time and manner, and brought upon themselves the misery of twenty years' tyranny. It is dangerous missing the time of our conversion, Luke xix. 42-44; missing the time of helping on our families to God-ward, Hosea xiv. 7; they utterly miscarry, 1 Sam. xx. 30. So for the church and temple work, Hag. i. 2; so for the commonwealth, 1 Kings ix. 4-7, xi. 23-25, and xii. 7, 19.

*Means* of discerning fit time and manner: first, Inward light of the Spirit, and image of God, Isa. xxx. 21; Prov. iv. 18, 19; fear of God and love to man give much light, Prov. xxv. 12; 1 John ii. 10, 11. Secondly, Avoid self-confidence, Prov. iii. 5-7, and xxviii. 26. Thirdly, Consult with God; in fasting and prayer, Esther iv. 6, with v. 2; in his word, Ps. cxix. 24, 105; in the times and opportunities of providence, Ps. xxxii. 8; in the counsels of godly wise, 1 Kings xii. 7. Fourthly, Fit manner in all actions is, faith, Rom. xiv. 23, and love, 1 Cor. xvi. 13; for the end, God's glory, 1 Cor. x. 31, and the good of others, 1 Cor. x. 24.

Ver. 8. *There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.*

Amongst the inventions which Solomon's subjects found out to excuse themselves from dealing faithfully with him, when he fell to the toleration and

maintenance of idolatry, in building temples to his wives' idols, and endowing them with liberal maintenance, and in employing the hands and service of his subjects in such structures, this was the third, That where the word of a king is, there is power, (or dominion, or authority, ver. 4,) and that power is irresistible and uncontrollable: 'Who may say unto him, What doest thou?'

This invention or excuse Solomon taketh away, first, By the safety of obedience to God's commandment: 'Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil,' ver. 5. Secondly, By the discretion which a wise man hath, ver. 5, to observe fit time and judgment; for missing whereof great misery falleth upon men, ver. 6, 7. Thirdly, By the restraint of magistrates' power from reaching to a double object: 1. To restrain or constrain the spirit or conscience; 2. To discharge from death, which latter power—to discharge or deliver from death—he denieth also to all wickedness, (which men will not stick to commit, to prevent the king's wrath, which else might be as the messenger of death, Prov. xvi. 14,) ver. 8. Fourthly, By the wise man's observation of one man's rule sometime over another for hurt, ver. 9.

*Power.* Here is a word of the same notation with that ver. 4, implying authority and dominion, whence *Sultan*. There is not a man that hath dominion over the spirit.

*Spirit.* It is not here meant the soul, to retain it in the body; for, 1. That is expressed in the next part of the verse. Neither is there power or dominion—to wit, in a king—in the day of death to discharge a subject in that war. 2. The verb translated *to retain*, is rather to compel, to restrain, or constrain, and properly signifieth *coerce*; as David called his son by Abigail by a name from this root, Chileab, 2 Sam. iii. 3, because of his mother's restraint of him from shedding blood: whence also כְּלֵא בֵּית, *a prison*, 2 Kings xvii. 4. To retain the soul in the body is wont to be expressed in another phrase in that language, Ps. xxii. 29; but by spirit is here meant the conscience, as elsewhere often, Prov. xx. 27, and xviii. 14; Acts xx. 22.

*Doct.* There is not a man, no, not the king, that hath a coercive power over the conscience.

He cannot, 1. Constrain to sin forbidden of God, Dan. iii. 13-18, nor restrain from duty commanded

of God, Dan. vi. 7 to 22. 2. Bind conscience in things indifferent—that is, lay such a weight or burden upon a commandment of his own that it shall be a sin to the conscience to neglect it. If man's commandment could bind the conscience, then the commandments of men would be the doctrines of religion, against Mat. xv. 9. 3. By outward punishments compel a man to do against his conscience—to wit, he cannot, that is, he ought not, till conscience be convinced, and then it is self-condemned.

*Reason 1.* From the immediate subjection of conscience to God; for, first, There God only writeth his law, Rom. ii. 15; secondly, God only can discern, judge, and punish sins against conscience: discern, Jer. xvii. 10; judge and punish, Job vi. 4; Luke xii. 4, 5; James iv. 12. Hence subjection of the conscience to man is flat idolatry.

*Reason 2.* From the immediate spiritual dominion of the conscience over the man, Rom. xiv. 5, 14, 23; Acts xx. 22.

*Use 1.* To resolve a great question of conscience, Whether a king or magistrate may compel men to profess and practise the religion established by law of his country?

*Ans.* First, For false religion. It is out of question; no, he sinneth in doing it, and the people in obeying it, 1 Kings xv. 30.

Secondly, For the true religion, as to worship the true God, the maker of heaven and earth, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we answer in six propositions.

*Propos. 1.* David and other godly kings of Israel did not force conquered pagan nations to worship the God of Israel, whether they lived in their own country or dwelt in the land of Israel. As in case a heathen proselyte came to join to the church of Israel, it was requisite he should circumcise his males, Exod. xii. 48, but not required that his wife should be of like religion with him, Num. xii. 1; the law in Ezra x. and Neh. xiii. concerning an Israelite marrying a pagan, and so Mal. ii. 11, not a heathen marrying a pagan before his conversion. It is not, therefore, a solid answer which some do give, that the kings of Israel are no precedents for Christian kings, partly because they were types of Christ, and because their land was typical and sacramental; for what they did as kings, heathen kings did the same lawfully. And the land of Israel did not for-

bid pagans to dwell in the land, as the Gibeonites and captives.

*Propos. 2.* Neither did the good kings of Israel, nor may Christian kings, compel any of their subjects to the fellowship of the church, to yield up themselves to their covenants, sacraments, and censures, unless they were fit for it and persuaded to it. This concerneth the second commandment, as the former did the first, Gen. ix. 27; Ps. cx. 3; Exod. xii. 48. If he will eat the passover, then let him first circumcise his males; else he may forbear both.

*Propos. 3.* It is not lawful for magistrates to suffer to live, first, Blasphemers of the true God, whether Christians or pagans, within their power, Dan. iii. 29, and vi. 26; 1 Kings xx. 23, 28, 42, whether in the land of Israel or out of it; yet Ahab no type of Christ. Secondly, Israelites or Christians apostate to idolatry, Dent. xvii. 2-7, in respect of their apostasy from the covenant, ver. 2. Thirdly, Witches, Exod. xxii. 18; Lev. xx. 27, with 22, 23. Fourthly, Seducers to idolatry, Dent. xiii. 1 to v. 11; and to heresy, Mat. v. 15; 2 Pet. ii. 1-3; Dent. xiii. 10; Zech. xiii. 3.

*Obj.* But is not this to punish a man for his conscience, and so to act contrary to the doctrine in hand?

*Ans.* It is not conscience that bindeth to these sins, but sinning against light of conscience. Blasphemers, apostates, witches, heretics, are ἀνόμοτοι, Titus iii. 10, 11. Paul hath tender respect of an ignorant, weak conscience, 1 Cor. iii. 7, 10, 11; not so of a hardened, 1 Tim. iv. 2. Such a conscience doth not extenuate, but aggravate sin, as being a punishment of sin against light and conscience.

*Propos. 4.* Magistrates may compel church members to observe church orders according to the word, and others not to disturb them, Ezra vii. 26, 27.

*Propos. 5.* Magistrates may compel all to hear the word of God, Acts iii. 22, 23; yet if men take exception at the calling, as being either too Romish, too near to Rome, or too far from it, let men be first convinced of the lawfulness to hear the word of God from any, Jer. xxviii. 1-6; 2 Chron. xxxv. 21, 22.

*Propos. 6.* No man can pretend conscience for atheism; for no nation is so barbarous, but is taken with conscience of a God.

*Use 2.* To inquire, How then do ministers and churches bind conscience? Ps. cxlix. 6, to Mat. xvi. 19, and xviii. 18.

*Ans.* Not by any injunctions of their own, but by ministerial declaring the commandments of God, and the Holy Ghost ratifying the same from Christ.

*Use 3.* To refute the popish and prelatical error of human laws binding conscience.

*Use 4.* To allow power to magistrates, where God alloweth it, Mat. xxii. {21; Rom. xiii. 7; hence give them honour, else their power is violated and taken away, Mat. vi. 4, 5. The former objection (before) may be propounded and resolved thus:

*Obj.* If blasphemers, idolaters, seducers to idolatry and heresy, be punishable even with death, then conscience is subject to coercive power.

*Ans.* Conscience is either natural, Rom. ii. 14, weak, 1 Cor. viii. 7, or seared, through the just judgment of God blinding the mind and conscience and hardening the heart, thereby to punish sin against conscience, or at least the not receiving of the truth with love, 1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11; Rom. i. 28. Natural conscience is not to be strained, according to proposition 1. (*supra*); 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26; weak conscience is not to be despised, Rom. xiv. 3; seared conscience doth not extenuate but increase both sin and punishment, Isa. xlv. 20; 2 Thes. ii. 11, 12; Rom. i. 28, 32; especially after once or twice admonition, Titus iii. 10.

*Doct. 2.* It is neither in the power of the king, nor in the dexterity of the craft-masters of wickedness, to discharge a man of his warfare in the day of death, פעלי-רשע, are craft-masters of wickedness, Ps. xciv. 4, 16.

*Reasons* of the former: 1. From God's determinate appointment of our ends, Job xiv. 5; Acts xvii. 26.

*Reason 2.* From the preciousness of a man's life and soul—greater than any man can give to God, Ps. cxlix. 7–9.

*Reason 3.* From the impotency of princes to deliver and discharge themselves from the war and stroke of death, Ps. xxiii. 29.

*Reason* of the latter, from the wages and desert of sin, Rom. vi. 23.

*Use 1.* To teach us there is a warfare between a man and death, 1 Cor. xv. 26, 54; as appeareth,

first, From the resemblance between death and war, in the effects. In death, as in war, we conflict *de summa rerum*, about all our chiefest worldly comforts, goods, lands, honours, pleasures, wife, children, liberty, life. In death, as in war, greatest violence is offered to us, and we use against it all our strength, Job ii. 4; 1. Of nature; 2. Of art, diet, and physic. Death, as war, conquering, carrieth captive to the prison of the grave, and many to hell, if death be not overcome; death feedeth on them, Ps. xlix. 14. Secondly, From the causes of this war: our earnest desire to preserve ourselves, John xxi. 18; 2 Cor. v. 4; whence death by philosophers was counted, τῶν φιλοσοφῶν φοβέσκατον, as most contrary and destructive to nature. Again, sin, which brought in death, Rom. v. 12, addeth a venomous sting to it, 1 Cor. xv. 56, whence, to a carnal heart, God's wrath, fear of hell, Satan's outrage, horror of conscience. Whence we are to learn, first, To prepare for this warfare; there is no avoiding it; profane confidence will not avail us, Isa. xxviii. 14, 15.

Means or preparation against death: 1. Death to sin, Rom. vi. 8, 9; 2. Death to the world, Gal. vi. 14; 1 Cor. vii. 29–31, and xv. 30, 31; 3. Faith in Christ, Job xiii. 15; 2 Tim. i. 12; Ps. cxlix. 1, 2, 5, 15; 4. Walking with God, as Enoch, Gen. v. 24, with Heb. xi. 5. Enoch's privilege is thus far communicated to all such as walk with God, that, though they escape not death, yet the bitterness of death, Prov. xi. 4, 19, and xii. 28. Such leave their souls to God with a quiet heart, their bodies to the grave with good report, and a blessed covenant behind them to their posterity; thus death will be our advantage, Phil. i. 21. Secondly, To abhor all self-murder, as not from human nature, but from Satan. For even corrupt nature desireth to preserve itself.

*Use 2.* To teach us not to do evil at princes' commands, nor to refuse to do good for fear of their displeasure, for they cannot deliver us from death; this is Solomon's scope.

*Use 3.* To teach us to serve such a master, as to whom alone it belongeth to save from death, Rev. i. 18; Ps. lxxviii. 20.

Ver. 9. *All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a*

*time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.*

Coherence, see in ver. 8. The words contain a fourth refutation of the third invention, mentioned ver. 4. As who should say, Where the word of the king is, there is power; but know withal, that where this power is always obeyed, at all times submitted to, this power or rule (for it is the same word with that, ver. 4) will be hurtful and pernicious to him that obeyeth it: There is a time when one ruleth over another for hurt to him. And this he proveth by his own diligent and serious observation and testimony: All this I have seen, and applied my heart, *נתון את לבי*, or in applying my heart to the consideration of all things done under the sun.

*Doct. 1.* A penitent and prudent soul, that casteth his eyes about him, and considereth all things which are done under the sun, shall observe a time wherein that man that ruleth over another, ruleth over him for hurt to him, *אשר שלט האדם באדם לרע לו*, translated one man; better, the man, whatsoever the man be; be it Solomon—he in his rule had a time wherein he set his people a-work to erect and adorn idols' temples, and this was the rent and ruin of the ten tribes, 1 Kings xi. 31, 33; 2 Kings xii. 28, 29, with xiv.—xvi.; their apostasy and captivity. Judah also followed the way of Israel to their apostasy and captivity also, 2 Kings xvii. 18, 19; so David before him, 2 Sam. xi. 4, 15, and xxiv. 1, 17; so Asa, 2 Chron. xvi. 10; so Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xviii. 1, with xxi. 3, 6, 8, 10; so Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 16–18; so Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxv. 22.

*Reason 1.* From God's good pleasure to leave every child of his at some time or other to some spiritual desertion, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. Wherein God's counsel is, first, To make us feel our need of Christ, Isa. xxxviii. 14; a soul oppressed crieth out for an undertaker or surety. Secondly, To make us like unto Christ, Luke xxii. 53; yet with this difference, he being sifted, no chaff or dross was found in him, John xiv. 30; not so we, Luke xxii. 31, 32. Thirdly, To make us know what is in our hearts, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31, especially self-exalting, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25; Ps. xxx. 6, 7; and to heal it, 2 Cor. xii. 7; Gen. xxxii. 25. Fourthly, To chasten the people's sin, who might idolise their rulers, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1; Lam. iv. 20.

*Reason 2.* From the power of corrupt nature, which, though subdued to grace, will sometimes break the yoke, as Esau did Jacob's yoke, Gen. xxvii. 40.

*Use 1.* To teach magistrates a holy and humble jealousy over themselves, and watchfulness also over themselves and one another. (The application of this to our present governor, see in the schedule annexed.<sup>1</sup>)

*Use 2.* To teach the people not to swallow down all the commandments of their rulers, lest sometimes they should rule you to evil; this is Solomon's scope here, Acts iv. 19; Micah vi. 16; Hosea v. 11.

*Use 3.* To provoke people to pray for their magistrates, that Christ would keep them in that time of trial.

Ver. 10. *And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity.*

This verse doth depend upon the former, by way of prevention of an objection—thus, if one rule over another to his hurt, the hurt will as well redound to him that ruleth as to them that are ruled. Wicked rulers often come to an untimely end, yea, want burial, Eccles. iii. 6; 1 Kings xiv. 11, xvi. 4, and xxi. 23, 24; 2 Kings ix. 33, 34; and infamy follows them after death, 1 Kings xv. 30. Whereto Solomon answereth, and by his own experience confirmeth it, It is not always so; I have seen a time wherein one ruleth over another to his hurt—that is, to the hurt of him that is ruled, to wit of the subject, not so of the ruler—and in so doing, that is, in ruling wickedly to the hurt of others, I have seen the wicked buried who had come and gone from the place of the holy; I have seen also the wicked forgotten in the city wherein they have so done, that is, had so wickedly ruled: this is also vanity. This increaseth vanity amongst men, and aggravateth the vanity of the condition of the sons of men.

*Doct. 1.* The place or seat of judgment is the place of the holy One.

For he speaketh here of wicked rulers, whom he describeth to have been conversant in the judgment-seat—in a Hebrew phrase, they had come and gone from the place of the holy; holy, in the singular

<sup>1</sup> To an American edition, I presume; not reproduced in the English edition, from which this is printed.—Ed.

number, that is, of the holy One. The holy One is God, Isa. lvii. 15. The place of the holy One is heaven, Isa. lxvi. 1; the temple, Acts xxi. 28; the throne or seat of judgment, Ps. lxxxii. 1; the humble heart, Isa. lvii. 15. The third is here meant; for he speaketh of kings, ver. 4, and of them as wicked, ver. 9. 10.

*Reason 1.* From God's ordinance thereof, Rom. iii. 1, 2.

*Reason 2.* From his presence there, Ps. lxxxii. 2; Prov. xxix. 26; 2 Chron. xix. 6.

*Reason 3.* From his ends there chiefly to be attended, 2 Chron. xix. 6.

*Use.* To teach magistrates to put off carnal affections, as shoes were put off by Moses, when we come to the judgment-seat, Exod. iii. 5; the like was done by Joshua, chap. v. 15.

*Doct. 2.* When a wicked ruler findeth a burial, and the memory of his wicked rule is buried with him, it is a vanity; or himself findeth a funeral, and his wicked rule no memorable obloquy.

When wicked rulers come to an untimely end, and their tyranny meeteth with just obloquy, it doth not a little avail, first, To the honour of God, Exod. xiv. 17, and xv. 1; secondly, To the edification and warning of men; Sennacherib in Herodot.; so Virgil's Mezentius: *Discite Justitiam*. For want of this Belshazzar was reprov'd, Dan. v. 20, &c. But yet it sometimes cometh to pass they do meet with burial, and no infamy upon their names, partly by the power of their successors, their children, and partly by a worse succeeding in their room.

*Reason of the vanity of this:* 1. It is an occasion of great growth of wickedness, ver. 11; for, first, The subjects comply with wicked rulers, if they meet with no great calamity in their life or death; secondly, Other wicked princes presume to do the like upon their wicked examples, indemnity, and impunity, ver. 11.

*Reason 2.* It is a fruit of the curse brought upon the civil state through the fall of our first parents, otherwise all evil should befall evil ones, and all good good ones.

*Reason 3.* It is no advantage to wicked princes, so buried and so forgotten; for the less check they meet withal here, the more they shall meet withal hereafter, Eccles. v. 8.

*Use 1.* To teach us to give honour to God, and to take warning to ourselves when we see God calling princes to account, Ps. lxxvi. 12, and cvii. 40; Job xii. 21, &c.

*Use 2.* To teach princes and rulers to rule in the fear of God righteously, 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, so they may expect comely burial and honourable memorial, 2 Chron. xvi. 14, xxiv. 16, xxxii. 33, and xxxv. 24. Not so others, 2 Chron. xxi. 19, &c., and xxxiii. 20; Jer. xxii. 18, 19.

*Use 3.* To teach all men, even private men, to do well in our generations; for if God recompense princes, surely he will not spare meaner persons, Prov. x. 7; Ps. cxii. 6.

Ver. 11. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

*Doct. 1.* Sentence is not so soon executed as passed against an evil work, Zeph. ii. 2. When an evil work is done, sentence passeth speedily, Zech. v. 1-4; a flying roll, to imply swiftness, Mal. iii. 5; Gen. iv. 7. Sin lieth at the door, as a sergeant or jailer, to watch and keep and dog him wheresoever he goeth. No sinner but goeth up and down with his keeper, Ps. xxxvii. 13, and ix. 16; 2 Pet. ii. 1, 3.

The sentence is passed speedily, first, In God's counsel, Micah ii. 3; Jer. xviii. 11; secondly, In the curse of God's law, Gen. ii. 17; Gal. iii. 10; thirdly, In the conscience of the sinner oftentimes, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10, like the sentence written on the wall of the house, Dan. v. 5; fourthly, In the preparation of the causes to conviction and execution, to wit, in the causes, one link draweth another. By David's adultery with Bathsheba a spirit of uncleanness got into his house; hence Amnon defileth Tamar, she was Absalom's sister, and that draweth Absalom to revenge; Absalom's beauty draweth on the king to pardon him; Bathsheba's father being Eliam, 2 Sam. xi. 3, and Eliam being the son of Ahithophel, 2 Sam. xxiii. 34, turned off Ahithophel from David to Absalom, 2 Sam. xv. 31, yet is not executed speedily, Gen. vi. 3; Num. xiv. 33; 1 Kings xxi. 29.

*Quest.* But why should the Lord be pleased to delay execution, seeing many evils grow upon it? as, first, It obscureth God's justice; the punishment

of a sin coming so long after seemeth rather a calamity than a just judgment of this or that sin ; secondly, God's providence is hence called into question, Ps. lxxiii. 11, 12 ; Mal. ii. 17 ; thirdly, Among men, the good are discouraged, Ps. lxxiii. 12-14, and the wicked are hardened, as in the text.

To these objections may be answered, first, God can clear his justice in his own time, and in his own way, by suitableness of the judgment, Judges i. 7, and remorse of conscience, Gen. xlii. 21 ; secondly, God will in every age clear his providence by some remarkable judgment, Ps. ix. 16, and lviii. 10, 11 ; thirdly, Good men must judge of things by the word, not by present events, Ps. lxxiii. 17. If some men be hardened, it is that God aimed at for their incorrigibleness, Isa. i. 5, or for the wickedness of their fathers, Hosea iv. 14.

*Reason of delay:* 1. Meet it is God should shew his patience as well as his justice, Exod. xxxiv. 6 ; Ps. cxlv. 8. Slow to anger, good to all, especially having placed the government of the world in the hand of a mediator, Exod. xxxiii. 2, 3. Secondly, To lead ou some to repentance, Rom. ii. 4 ; 2 Pet. iii. 9, 15 ; 1 Tim. i. 16. Thirdly, To reward humiliation, though not sincere, 1 Kings xxi. 29 ; 2 Chron. xii. 6, 7. Fourthly, To give way to others to fulfil the measure of their sins, Gen. xv. 16, and so to make way for the treasuring up and shewing forth his power and wrath, Rom. ii. 5 ; Deut. xxxii. 34, 35.

*Doct. 2.* The delay of punishment upon sin filleth the heart of sinners to do evil.

Filleth them, first, With resolution to sin, Jer. xlv. 16, 17, and with boldness, Isa. iii. 9 ; secondly, With custom in sin, Jer. xiii. 23 ; thirdly, With skill in sin, Jer. xiv. 22.

*Reason 1.* From the depraving of their judgments by this means ; either to think, first, There is no God, Ps. xiv. 1, or at least that he regardeth not things below ; secondly, That God is like themselves, Ps. l. 21 ; thirdly, That such and such evils are no sin.

*Reason 2.* From the depravation of our wills by impunity, not to fear God, Ps. lv. 19.

*Use 1.* To take notice of the venomous corruption of our nature, that can suck such poison out of such a sweet attribute as the patience of God.

*Use 2.* To beware of such an abuse.

*Use 3.* To exhort us to be more filled with forwardness to good, and hatred of evil ; first, By the judgments of God against sin ; secondly, By the mercies of God to the godly.

*Use 4.* To teach courts and churches, neither of them to be too slow in executing sentence against evil-doers.

VER. 12. *Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:*

VER. 13. *But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow ; because he feareth not before God.*

In the former verse Solomon declared the abuse which wicked men make of God's patience, and of man's also : because sentence is not executed speedily against an evil work, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. In these words he giveth an antidote against this abuse, taken from his own knowledge and certain observation of the good estate of them that fear God, and the evil estate of the wicked.

The good estate of the godly he amplifieth, first, By the diverse events : though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his punishment be prolonged, yet it shall be well with them that fear God. Secondly, By the contrary estate of the wicked : it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days ; the brevity whereof is amplified by the simile of a shadow. Thirdly, By the cause of this their different estate : because the one feared before the face of God, the other doth not fear before God. Fourthly, By an argument from Solomon's own testimony thereof, and that not out of conjecture, but out of his own certain knowledge.

*Doct. 1.* Howsoever a wicked man may sin oft and escape long, yet a godly-wise man may fully assure himself and others that it shall go well with them that fear God ; but neither well nor long with the wicked.

*Sin oft.* The text saith an hundred times—a certain number of multitude for an uncertain. לו כִּי־אֵרֶךְ is not *And his days be prolonged.* Days is not in the sentence ; and that is denied in the next verse, 'He shall not prolong his days.' But the meaning is, And a prolonging be to him—to wit, of

execution of sentence, if punishment be long delayed, and so he long escapeth.

*Yet surely I know.* And so a godly-wise man may know and assure himself and others, 'that it shall be well with them that fear God.'

*Quest.* Why doth he not rather say, that it shall not be well with the wicked? That would make the opposition more direct.

*Ans.* First, Because many times the long continuance of the wicked in their sinful course with impunity is a punishment and hardship to the godly: Saul's reign is David's banishment; Ahab's reign is Micaiah's imprisonment, 1 Kings xxii. 27. Secondly, Because the godly are apt to stumble at the sight of the impunity and prosperity of the wicked, compared with their own straits, Ps. lxxiii. ; Jer. xii. 1; and the godly must first have cordials before the wicked receive their corrosives: Mat. xxiv. 34, 41; Isa. iii. 10, 11; Prov. xi. 31; Ps. lv. 23; Job xv. 31, &c.

*Quest.* How or wherein doth it appear that, notwithstanding the long patience of God to wicked men, yet certainly it shall go well with the godly, but neither well nor long with the wicked?

*Ans.* First, In that it is a pledge of greater mercy reserved for them that fear God, the more that God prolongeth his patience and long-sufferings to wicked men, Rom. ix. 22, 23. Secondly, In that this long patience of God to the wicked is an evidence of greater wrath prepared and treasured up for them, Rom. ii. 4, 5. Thirdly, In that there is a speedy shortening of the rage of the wicked over the godly, Ps. cxxv. 3. Fourthly, In that the days of the wicked are always cut off suddenly, before the time either of their expectation, or at least of their preparation, Amos viii. 9. The sun shall go down at noon implieth partly a great change and immediate from height to depth, Ps. xcii. 7, and partly a sudden change, before the business and the day be half finished.

*Reason.* From the fear of God in the godly, and the want of the fear of God in the wicked. This reason is expressly given in the text: 'It shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him,' ver. 12. 'It shall be evil with the wicked, because he feareth not before God,' ver. 13.

*Before God.* The Hebrew is, Before the face of God—that is, before, first, His presence in his ordin-

ances, Ps. cv. 14; secondly, His presence in his providence, Prov. v. 21; Ps. cxix. 168, and xxxiv. 16.

*Fear of God.* First, In holy reverence of his great and glorious majesty and goodness, Ps. cxxx. 4; Hosea iii. 5; secondly, In humble sense of our great weakness and unworthiness, Phil. ii. 12, 13; thirdly, In awful shunning to displease him, Prov. xvi. 6.

*Use 1.* To restrain us from quarrelling at God's providence, because it may sometimes seem to go worse with God's people than with the wicked, Jer. xii. 1. Say it confidently, and it shall go well with the godly, Ps. lxxiii. 1; not so to the wicked.

*Use 2.* To take heed of abusing God's patience unto hardness of heart in sin.

*Use 3.* To support the spirit of such as fear God in the midst of the prosperity of the wicked, and in the midst of their own afflictions.

*Use 4.* To teach us the fear of God; fear before his face, his ordinances, and his providences. It is a certain presage of good success, 2 Chron. xx. 3, 12, 15, and xi. 12; it is an overcoming or denial of ourselves, which else being wanting would enfeeble us, 1 Sam. ii. 9; Judges vii. 2.

Ver. 14. *There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity.*

Ver. 15. *Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.*

In these verses, to the end of the twelfth verse of the ninth chapter, Solomon declareth and setteth forth another vanity which he observed in the world, the promiscuous successes and events that befall good men and bad, chiefly by the misgovernment of princes.

In this fourteenth verse he propoundeth one kind of it, 'That there be just men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; and on the contrary, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous.'

This promiscuous event he amplifieth, first, By the adjunct vanity of it: there is a vanity done upon



the earth : I said this is also vanity—vanity ushereth it in, and waiteth upon it after, ver. 14 ; both are vanity, both that the just find according to the work of the wicked, and that the wicked find according to the work of the just. Secondly, By the effect it wrought in Solomon, which is the use he made of it, to commend mirth. And that he proveth, first, By the equality of the goodness hereof, the free and cheerful use of the good things of this life being equal to any other course which a man can take in such a cause ; secondly, By the permanency of this good with him as a sauce to sweeten all his labour in the days of his life which God giveth him, ver. 15. The coherence of these words with the former is, that Solomon saw some wicked rulers honourably buried, the punishment of some offenders prolonged, and thereby to outward view it might appear that the estate of wicked men was better than the estate of the godly, save only that faith knoweth the contrary, ver. 10–13 ; he thereby taketh occasion to observe and set forth this vanity more distinctly and fully, the promiscuous estate and success of good and bad men in these, and in the following verses. The promiscuous events are of three sorts : first, That the good men fare as the evil should fare, and that evil fare as good should do, text. Secondly, That sometimes both fare alike. If good men fare well, so do the wicked ; if the wicked fare evil, so do the good, chap. ix. 1–10. Thirdly, That men of best ability and dexterity are disappointed of their hopes and means, ver. 11, 12.

*Doct.* 1. It is a vanity to be observed upon the earth, that sometimes it befalleth just men according to the work of the wicked, and it sometimes befalleth the wicked according to the work of the righteous, Luke xvi. 25 ; Ps. lxxiii. 12–14.

*Reason* 1. Through the wickedness or weakness of rulers in commonwealth and church, Ps. xii. 8 ; Isa. lix. 15 ; Mal. iii. 15 ; 2 Sam. xvi. 3, 4 ; Ezek. xiii. 22.

*Reason* 2. Through the wise providence of God, dispensing good things to the wicked, to lead them to repentance, Rom. ii. 4, or else to harden them in impenitency, Rom. ii. 5. Dispensing evil things to the righteous, first, For chastisement and mortification of sin, 1 Cor. xi. 32 ; secondly, For trial, Dan. xi. 35 ; Isa. xxvii. 9 ; thirdly, For our good at the

latter end, Deut. viii. 16 ; Heb. v. 8 ; Job xxiii. 10. All these three ends are coincident.

*Reasons* of vanity. There is a fourfold vanity in it : 1, Of uncomeliness, Prov. xi. 22, and xxvi. 1, 8.

*Reason* 2. Of unprofitableness ; the wicked make an ill use of it, Ps. lii. 19 ; so do the godly, Ps. lxxiii. 13, 14.

*Reason* 3. Vanity of uncertainty, Acts xx. 22, not knowing what shall befall me.

*Reason* 4. Of confusion, following the fall, and the condition of all earthly things after the fall, Rom. viii. 20 ; not that there is any vanity in God's administration of itself—all his acts are wisdom and righteousness—but, first, In men it is a sinful vanity ; to wit, of unprofitableness in the sufferers, and of folly in the doers of it—viz, in such as exalt the wicked, and discourage the good. Secondly, In other creatures, I mean in the disposal of them in this manner, it is a penal vanity.

*Use* for the wicked, Not to account themselves righteous, though it happen to them according to the work of the righteous. Either thence learn to repent, Rom. ii. 4, or look for wrath upon wrath, ver. 5. This use is gathered from the verse before the text, Eccles. viii. 13.

*Use* for godly men, To commend mirth to a godly heart, as here Solomon doth : 'Then I commended mirth,' or joy, ver. 15 ; that is, first, A free use of the creatures, meat, drink, and the like, ver. 15, and chap. ix. 7–9 ; secondly, Contentment in a man's estate ; thirdly, Delight therein.

*Reason* 1. If it fare well with us, it is better with us than many other just men.

*Reason* 2. It abideth with us or cleaveth to us of our labour ; it is the result of our labour through mercy.

*Reason* 3. Joy is as oil to the wheels ; it strengtheneth us to all the duties of our calling, or maketh them easy, Neh. viii. 10.

*Reason* 4. If it go ill with us, yet we have conveniency, yea, much more than we deserve, Gen. xxxii. 10 ; Lam. iii. 20 ; and mourning for crosses doth more hurt than good, 2 Cor. vii. 10.

*Obj.* But ought not a man to be humbled under crosses ?

*Ans.* 1. Yes ; but when we have been humbled,

then bear all cheerfully and thankfully, 1 Sam. i. 7, 18; 2 Sam. xii. 20-24; 2 Cor. xii. 7-9. Abandon, therefore, sullenness and discontentment under crosses. 2. To follow diligent labour in our calling. It is that whereto joy and mirth is joined; the same word with that, Gen. xxix. 34; Eccles. v. 12. 3. To reckon our lives by days, as the wise man here doth, Ps. xc. 12; Gen. xlvii. 9. It will help us, first, Not to promise ourselves multitudes of years, Ps. xc. 5; secondly, To prepare to give account for each day, Ps. xxxix. 12; thirdly, To improve and make use of present opportunity, Heb. iii. 15; fourthly, To forecast provision for the day, Mat. vi. 11. 4. To look at every day as a new gift of God, text, ver. 15.

Ver. 16. *When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes.)*

Ver. 17. *Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun; because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea farther, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.*

In the two former verses Solomon observed it as a great vanity, the promiscuous event and estate that befell good men and bad, especially through the misgovernment of princes. In these two verses he observeth the like promiscuous event and estate of both good and bad from the work and providence of God; which various dispensation of all events alike to all sorts of men, good and bad, Solomon here setteth forth by the adjunct thereof, his own serious meditation and study, and inquiry after the reason of it, after the wisdom and counsel of God's proceeding in it, which study and meditation of his he enlargeth and amplifieth in these verses, and in the former part of the next chapter. In these verses by two adjuncts: first, By the restlessness and assiduity of it, so as he found no rest nor sleep night nor day to seek out this matter, ver. 16. Secondly, By the fruitlessness of it, he could not find what he sought; which he setteth forth by a double amplification, *a diversis*: 1. Of labour in searching—though a man labour in seeking it out; 2. Of wisdom—yea, if a wise man think and purpose, and

profess to seek it and to find it out, and to know it, yet shall he not be able to attain it, ver. 17.

*Doct.* 1. A man that shall apply his heart to search and discern the wisdom of God in his work and dealing with the righteous and with the wicked, though himself be wise and his labour great to find it out, yet his labour shall be fruitless, and himself restless. He speaketh here of the wisdom of God in his work and dealing with the righteous and with the wicked, both alike, as appeareth by the verse before, ver. 15, and the verses following, chap. ix. 1-3. His labour shall be fruitless, for he shall not find out what he sought for, ver. 17; and himself restless, as Solomon himself confesseth, (and he seemeth to speak it of himself,) there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes, Ps. lxxiii. 16; Jer. xii. 1, 2; Hab. i. 13-15; Job ix. 10-12.

*Reasons* why fruitless: 1. From God's concealment many times of the causes and reasons of the afflictions of his people, especially in the beginning of their troubles till towards the end. Job was long before he saw the reason of God's strange hand upon himself, Job x. 2-7; and it is a great part of their affliction that they cannot discern the reason of God's dealing with them. God concealeth his mind till we have learned to prefer his wisdom and will above our own. When Job stooped to this, Job xl. 2-5, with xlii. 5, 6, then he not only saw a gracious issue, but the cause of all his troubles, from God's conference with Satan.

*Reason* 2. From the power of God to have brought to pass any ends of his own and ours in dealing bountifully with the godly, and justly with the wicked, if it had pleased him. Though sanctified affliction be wholesome to the godly, yet God was able to have humbled and healed them without such outward crosses and afflictions. The spirit of grace could do it effectually by the word. That God chooseth rather to do it by afflictions, what man can find the reason? Or if some reason might be rendered in regard of our fellowship with the first Adam in sin and vanity, and with the second Adam in afflictions, yet why might not God have chosen rather to afflict the godly in the inner man, than in the outward man? and why might not the wicked have undergone greater afflictions in this world?

*Reason 3.* From the free choice which God maketh of some men, both of the good and of the bad, to deal well with some of both sorts, and to deal sharply with others of both sorts, Job xxi. 23–25.

*Reasons why restless:* 1. From the disproportion between the faculty and the object. The wisdom of God in these ways of his providence is beyond our reach; and therefore, as when the members of the body are reached and stretched beyond their compass, it chaseth away all sleep and rest; so when the mind is set upon the rack by such transcendent meditations, it rendeth the soul with vexation and restless quietness.

*Reason 2.* From the force of earnest intension of the mind in difficult and abstruse studies, to waste and scatter those cool and moist vapours which rise from the stomach to cool the brain, and would stop the passage of the animal spirit to the senses, and so procure sleep. For the animal spirits of the brain, being heated with agitation and study, do also heat those vapours, and so attenuate and disperse and spend them that they cannot stop the passage of the spirits to the senses, and so sleep is chased away. This is a natural cause, which is the more aggravated by the hand of God taking away natural rest from such as cannot rest satisfied in His will, unless they may be of his counsel, Job xxxiii. 13.

*Use 1.* To teach us to content ourselves in seeking out by our own wisdom the counsel of God in his dealing with ourselves or others; but by faith and patience to wait for a good issue. Faith, first, Seeth God's hand in all, and sanctifieth the name of his sovereignty; he is the potter, we the clay; wisdom, Job ix. 4, righteousness, Jer. xii. 1, grace to his people, and faithfulness, Ps. cxix. 75. Secondly, Stirreth up to prayer for a profitable use of all, Ps. cxliii. 10. Thirdly, Humbles us under the mighty hand of God, 1 Pet. v. 6. Fourthly, Directeth us to the word for further counsel, Ps. lxxiii. 17.

*Use 2.* To confine our evening meditations to matters within our compass. Evening meditations should rather be devotional than scholastical, to beat our brain will leave it without fruit or rest.

*Use 3.* To acknowledge it, as Solomon here doth penitentially, as a vanity in ourselves, that we have sought to find out God's work and wisdom by our own wisdom.

## CHAPTER IX.

*Ver. 1.* *For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.*

*Ver. 2.* *All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.*

In the two last verses of the former chapter Solomon set forth his serious inquisition after the reason and wisdom and counsel of God in ordering the like promiscuous events to the righteous and to the wicked; and he sets it forth by a twofold adjunct: 1. The restlessness of himself in it; he saw no sleep with his eyes, ver. 16. 2. The fruitlessness of it; he could not find it, though a wise man and labouring to find it, chap. viii. 17.

In these two verses he setteth forth the same inquisition by the effect it wrought in him, the giving of his heart to declare all this, to wit, that followeth,—viz., to declare four observations, which he had found out touching this matter: first, That the righteous, and the wise, and their works are in the hand of God, ver. 1. Secondly, That no man can know the love or hatred of God to themselves or others by any outward events, ver. 1, or by all that is before them, before their eyes, obvious to them. Thirdly, That all things come alike to all sorts of all, which he expresseth by a distribution of the subject, ver. 2, to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and that sacrificeth not; to the good, and to the sinner; to him that sweareth, and to him that feareth an oath. Fourthly, That this is an evil among all things done under the sun, ver. 3.

*Doct. 1.* That which a man giveth his heart to seek and to find of all the ways of God, so far as he hath found it, he should also give his heart to declare it. Solomon told us, in ver. 16 of the former chapter, he set his heart with much labour to seek the reason, and wisdom, and counsel of God in the promiscuous events that befall the sons of men. That which he sought he found not; but what upon

search he did find, he here telleth us he set his heart upon it to declare it, Job v. 27; Eccles. vii. 25-29.

*Reason 1.* From the end of all God's works, whether of creation or providence. It is that they may be known, and that God may be known in them, Ps. cvii. 43, lxxviii. 4-7, and cxi. 4; no man can remember what he knoweth not, Joel i. 4.

*Reason 2.* From the end of all our knowledge of God, which is (this for one of them) to tell it to others, Eccles. xii. 9; 1 Cor. xii. 7. No light is to be put under a bushel, Mat. v. 15. All knowledge is light; talents not to be buried.

*Use 1.* To teach us not to be sparing this way; what we have searched and learned in any kind of good knowledge, the more ready to be to communicate it, Job v. 27, and xv. 17, 18.

*Use 2.* To teach us to inquire and search knowledge; younger persons from the more aged, to give them occasion to declare what they have searched out, Job viii. 8-10; Prov. xx. 5. A seasonable question is here a good bucket.

*Doct. 2.* The righteous, the wise, and their works are in the hand of God, ver. 1,—that is, first, He is the disposer of them after his own will; they are in his power and pleasure to order one way or other; so the phrase taken, Gen. xvi. 6, and xxxi. 29; Job i. 12, and ii. 6. Secondly, He reserveth the knowledge of them, and of the disposal of them, to himself; so the phrase also taken, Acts i. 7. Both these meanings are here pertinent, Ps. xxxi. 15; Jer. x. 23; Prov. xx. 24.

*Reason 1.* From God's absolute sovereignty over the creatures, Jer. xviii. 6. As being the cause: first, The efficient, procreant, and conservant; secondly, The final cause of them all, Rom. xi. 36.

*Reason 2.* From the precious esteem and regard which God hath of his righteous servants and their ways, Isa. xliii. 2, 4; Ps. i. 6.

*Reason 3.* From the righteous men's commendation of themselves and their ways into the hand of God, Ps. xxxvii. 5; 2 Tim. i. 12. These also wisely consider and observe how God keepeth and guideth them, Ps. cvii. 43.

*Reason 4.* From the wicked man's slighting and despising his own way, Prov. xix. 16. As he that regardeth not to choose his way, but goeth through thick and thin, he despiseth his way; so he that

careth not whether his way be pure or filthy. These three last reasons shew why the righteous and their ways are more expressly said to be in the hand of God, than wicked men and their ways be, though the ways of the wicked are in God's hand also, Isa. xlv. 1, x. 5, 6, and xxxvii. 29; Ps. cxxv. 5.

*Use 1.* For comfort to the righteous. If we and our ways be in the hand of God, where can they be safer? there let us rest. And therefore also in all estates to be the more contentful, Ps. xxxix. 9, thankful, Job i. 21, and fruitful; and so to grow the more humbled in sinful failings, and the more enlarged in faith on God in well-doing. It might humble a good heart, that himself fell into any sin; but the more that God in displeasure gave him up to it, Isa. lxiii. 17. In well-doing it is a comfort to have done well, but much greater that God helped us, 1 Chron. xxix. 10, 14.

*Use 2.* To instruct us to be wise as well as righteous, in not trusting to our own power and will, for both are in God's hand, Prov. iii. 5, 6; James iv. 13-15.

*Use 3.* To abase wicked men, whom God doth not vouchsafe to carry in his hand, neither them nor their works.

*Doct. 3.* No man can certainly discern the love or hatred of God to himself or others, by their outward events and estates.

*No man knoweth.* Knowledge is *certi axiomatis judicium*. If no man knoweth, then no man certainly discerneth.

Love or hatred—to wit, of God; for of God he spake in the words next before: 'The righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hands of God.'

To himself or others; for if he discern not the love or hatred of God to himself, much less to others; and if he could discern it to himself, he might to others; and if to others, he might discern it to himself; for outward things are alike discernible in both.

By all that is before them—that is, by all thing lying open to their outward senses, as prosperous or adverse estates and events, Mat. vi. 19, 20. If a man might know the love of God to him by outward things, those outward things would be a treasure to him, which Christ denieth.

*Reason 1.* From the corruption and changeable

ness of outward things, Mat. vi. 19, and therefore they cannot be certain evidences of an unchangeable and uncorruptible estate.

*Reason 2.* From the like events and successes and estates to all, Eccles. ix. 2. Good name to Demetrius, 3 John 12, as well as to the false prophets, Luke vi. 26. Wealth to the rich epicure, Luke xii. 16, as well as to Abraham, Gen. xxiv. 35, and to Isaac, Gen. xxvi. 12. Pleasure to the wicked, Job xxi. 11, 12, as well as to the godly, Eccles. ii. 10. Health and strength to epicures, Ps. lxxiii. 4, as well as to Caleb, Joshua xiv. 11. Beauty to Absalom and such, 2 Sam. xiv. 25; Prov. xi. 22, as well as to Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel. Long life to Ishmael, Gen. xxv. 17, as well as to Isaac, Gen. xxxv. 28. Learning and wisdom to the Egyptians, Acts vii. 22, as well as to Moses and Daniel, Acts vii. 22; Dan. i. 17. Crosses to bastards, Ps. lxxviii. 33, as well as to sons, Ps. lxxiii. 14; Heb. xii. 8. Sickness to the disobedient, Deut. xxviii. 59, 60, as well as to David, Ps. xli. 8. Poverty to Job's scorers, Job xxx. 3, as well as to Lazarus, Luke xvi. 20. Sudden death to the disobedient, Ps. lv. 23; Prov. xxix. 1, as well as to Jeroboam's good son, 1 Kings xiv. 12, 13. Violent death; Jonathan died in the field, and by the hand of the uncircumcised, as well as Saul, 1 Sam. xxxi. 1, 2.

*Reason 3.* From the curse and vanity that lieth upon all the creatures by the fall, Gen. iii. 17. It is a bondage to the creature to minister to the wicked, not to minister to the godly, Rom. viii. 20, 21. This is the reason of the former reason.

*Obj.* Did not Cain know God's acceptance of Abel above himself, by an outward sign of fire from heaven, or the like? Gen. iv. 4, 5.

*Ans.* That was a miraculous event, as was also the fire that fell upon Elias's sacrifice, 1 Kings xviii. 38; but Solomon speaketh of ordinary common events.

*Obj.* 2. But is there not great difference of a godly man's bearing the events and estates that befall him, and a wicked man's bearing his?

*Ans.* Yes; but Solomon speaketh not of outward fruits, but outward events.

*Obj.* 3. Ps. xli. 11.

*Ans.* David knew not the favour of God from the outward deliverance, but from the grace of God

secretly revealed in it. So any benefits sprinkled with the blood of Christ may hold forth everlasting mercies, Ps. cxxxvi. 23–25.

*Use 1.* Against papists: first, Then outward prosperity is no outward sign of the church, though Bellarmine make it his fifteenth note, *De Notis Ecclesiae*, lib. iv. cap. 18. Secondly, Who abuse this place from the corrupt vulgar Latin translation, to undermine and destroy the assurance of faith of the love of God to a faithful soul, against evident Scripture, 1 John iii. 14, &c.; 1 Cor. ii. 12; Rom. viii. 16; 2 Pet. i. 10. It is a whorish church that bringeth not up her children to know their father.

*Use 2.* To teach us to judge wisely of the chastisements of the godly, not to misconstrue God's meaning in them to ourselves, or others lying under them, Ps. xli. 1–3. This misjudging was the sin of Job's friends, for which God's wrath was kindled, Job xlii. 7.

*Use 3.* To warn wicked men neither to bless themselves in their prosperity, as if that were a sign of God's favour, Zech. xi. 5; nor in their adversity to promise to themselves impunity in another world, because they have their punishment in this world.

*Use 4.* To exhort to look at things within us, and from us, for the knowledge of God's love to us. Within us: 1. The testimony of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 16; 1 John iii. 24; 2. The gifts of the Spirit accompanying salvation, Acts xvi. 30, 31; 1 John xiv. 18, 19. From us: our election of God to be our God, Ps. lxxiii. 25.

*Doct.* 4. All the sons of men are ranked into two sorts, righteous or wicked, good men or sinners, clean or unclean, Mal. iii. 18; 1 John v. 19.

*Reason 1.* From God's eternal purpose to make all the vessels of the house of the world either to honour or dishonour, Rom. ix. 21.

*Reason 2.* From the different original root of all men, either flesh or spirit, John iii. 6.

*Reason 3.* From the two different ways that all men take, Mat. vii. 13, 14; 1 John iii. 7, 8.

*Reason 4.* From the largeness of the two covenants, dividing all men between them, Gal. iii. 10, and iv. 24, &c.; Rom. vi. 14, &c., and viii. 1, 5.

*Reason 5.* From the integrity of the whole man, required in God's service; which being wanting,

men serve the devil, Mat. vi. 24 ; Acts xxvi. 18 ; Col. i. 13.

*Use 1.* Against purgatory ; for presuppose the truth of the doctrine, and there be but two places for these two sorts, to be bestowed in after this life, Mat. xxv. 32, &c.

*Use 2.* To try what our estate is ; every one of us belongeth either to one of these sorts, or to the other.

Marks of difference, besides the former difference mentioned in the reasons : 1. What people do we belong to ? to such we are gathered after death, Num. xx. 24 ; Gen. xxv. 17 ; 2. Where is all a man's delight, Ps. xvi. 3, xxvi. 5, and cxxxix. 21, 22, and communion, Ps. exx. 5 ; thither shall he be gathered after death ; and not with the contrary, Ps. xxvi. 9. If we delight in men for righteousness sake, then the more righteous they be, the more we delight in them, Ps. xvi. 3.

*Doct. 5.* All the righteous in the world are also good and clean, offering sacrifices and fearing oaths ; and all the wicked are also unclean, sinners, negligent sacrificers, and fearless swearers.

Good, as, first, Filled with good treasure, Mat. xii. 35 ; secondly, Bringeth forth good fruit, Mat. vii. 18, and so fitted for good uses, 2 Tim. ii. 21 ; not so the wicked, Mat. xii. 35 ; Tit. i. 16.

Clean, first, By imputation of the righteousness of Christ, Ezek. xxxvi. 25 ; secondly, By sanctification of the Spirit, Isa. xliii. 3 ; Ps. lxxiii. 1. The wicked are neither, Mat. vii. 23. The sinner erreth, first, From the rule or way, Ps. xiv. 3 ; secondly, From the mark or end, Prov. xvi. 25.

Sacrificing, as, first, Observing God's statute-worship, Ps. cxix. 5 ; secondly, Setting their hearts and delight and cost upon it, 1 Chron. xxix. 3, and xxi. 24 ; Gen. iv. 4.

This the wicked either neglect altogether, 2 Chron. xv. 3 ; Ps. exix. 155, or perform perfunctorily, Mal. i. 7, &c.

The righteous fear an oath, first, As not daring to take it in vain ; secondly, As observing it religiously, when taken, Joshua ix. 19 ; 2 Sam. ix. 1 ; not so the wicked, Hosea iv. 2 ; Jer. xxiii. 10 ; Ezek. xvii. 18, 19.

*Use.* For trial of our estates, whether we be righteous or wicked, by these fruits.

Ver. 3. *This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all : yea also, the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.*

Ver. 4. *For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope : for a living dog is better than a dead lion.*

Ver. 5. *For the living know that they shall die : but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward ; for the memory of them is forgotten.*

Ver. 6. *Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished ; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.*

The fourth thing that Solomon observed, and thought it meet to declare from the promiscuous events of all alike unto all, is the evil of it, especially the evil effect of it, in the hearts of the sons of men. Coherence, see in ver. 1, 2.

*Doct.* Amongst all the evils that are done under the sun, this equality of events to all sorts of men alike, it filleth the hearts of men with evil and madness, all their lifetime, even to their death, ver. 3 ; as who should say, This maketh them live an ill life, and die an ill death ; yea, live madly, and die madly. Moses and Aaron were as well excluded from Canaan, as the unbelieving and murmuring Israelites. Josias was as well slain by an arrow in battle against his enemies, as Ahab. Nebuchadnezzar is said to have lived forty years in a victorious reign, as well as David. See many more such like instances in ver. 1, Doct. 3.

This is an evil, first, Afflictive, both to good men, Ps. lxxiii. 21, and to evil men, Ps. cxii. 10 ; secondly, Corruptive ; it filleth the hearts of men with, first, Evil of wickedness or sin ; secondly, Madness, ver. 3.

First, Evil of sin. The ground of this evil imagination springeth occasionally from these promiscuous events, as conceiving they flow from the not guidance of them by providence : 1. Evil imaginations in particular, that the basest life here is better than the best life hereafter, confirmed by a proverb, 'A living dog is better than a dead lion,' ver. 4. And this they hold forth in four instances : first, In stay and provision of supply : the living have something to trust unto, see the Hebrew, ver. 4 ; the dead

have neither friends, nor money, nor strength, &c. Secondly, In knowledge even of some future things: the living know that they shall die; the dead know nothing at all, ver. 5. Thirdly, In rewards: the dead have no more a reward, no, not so much as a memorial of their good deeds, whilst they lived, ver. 5; but the living meet with some reward here, Eccles. iv. 9; Esther vi. 3, 10; Ezek. xxix. 19. Fourthly, In the enjoyment of the objects of their affections, ver. 6; their love, and their hatred, and envy is now perished, viz., they have neither affections nor objects of them left, nor any portion in things here below, beyond which they look not, ver. 6. Hence the most famous of the heathens have preferred the meanest life on earth above all the hopes they had of another world. Homer reporteth of his Achilles, he had rather be a servant to a poor country clown here, than to be a king to all the souls departed; so Mæcenas in Seneca had rather live in many diseases than die. It is another evil imagination, to think God like wicked men—to wit, in liking well of them, Ps. l. 21. 2. Evil resolutions, Eccles. viii. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 32; Isa. lvi. 12. 3. Evil speeches and practices, Isa. x. 11; Job iii. 1, &c. Men's hearts are also said to be filled with madness as well as with wickedness, by occasion of like events to all, in that they break forth, first, To outrageous violence in sin, Ps. lxxiii. 5, 6; secondly, To foolish, vainglorious boasting in sin. The Hebrew word cometh of a root that signifieth to praise or glory, Isa. iii. 9. And filled they be with wickedness and madness from this occasion, all their lifetime, even to death, Job xxi. 13; Ps. lv. 19.

*Use 1.* To shew a great difference between the righteous and the wicked. The hope of the wicked is only in this life, ver. 4, Job viii. 13, 14; but the righteous hath his chief hope and trust in another, 1 Cor. xv. 19; Prov. xiv. 32. The wicked had rather live a dog's life here, than hazard his estate in another world. If he hasten his death, it is through Satan's efficiency; the righteous longeth for dissolution, Phil. i. 23. The wicked knoweth little of any future thing, but that he shall die, ver. 5; the godly knoweth that when he dieth, he shall see God, shall be like him, &c., Job xix. 25-27; 1 John iii. 2. The wicked shall have reward in everlasting

fire, Ps. ix. 17, but at best themselves look for none; the godly shall have a reward in eternal glory, Isa. xlix. 4. The wicked shall never exercise their love any more after this life, nor shall ever meet with anything lovely, ver. 6; though they shall not employ their hatred or envy about earthly things here, yet they shall both hate God, and envy the happiness of his saints; but the righteous shall abound in love to God, and in God's love to them, Ps. xvi. 11. We shall abound also in mutual love to all the saints and angels; the greatest strangers there will love us better than our best friends here, Ps. xvii. 15. Our hatred will not be wanting against Satan and wicked persecutors, Rev. vi. 10; our zeal also shall then abound, (that which is here translated envy, signifieth also zeal, Isa. xxxvii. 32.) The wicked have no portion but in this life, Ps. xvii. 14; the portion of our inheritance is after this life, 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

*Use 2.* Not to misconstrue God's dealings with ourselves or others. It is a root of atheism, and will make us worse than the devils; for they believe there is a God, and tremble, James ii. 19.

*Use 3.* To teach us not to rest in a carnal condition. It leaveth us without knowledge, without reward, and without portion.

*Ver. 7. Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.*

*Ver. 8. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.*

*Ver. 9. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.*

*Ver. 10. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*

Solomon having in the former verses declared four observations which he gathered from God's dispensing like events to all, he now giveth some practical directions from the same ground: first, That a man should take all the good which the providence of God putteth into his hand, ver. 7-9; secondly, That

he should do all the good which God putteth into his hand to do, ver. 10.

1. The good which he directeth a man to take is in the enjoyment of the comfortable use of all the blessings which God giveth him in this life; which blessings are chiefly five: first, Meat or bread, it to be eaten with joy, ver. 7; secondly, Wine, it to be drunken with a cheerful heart, ver. 7; thirdly, Garments, and they to be always white; fourthly, Ointments, and they not to be lacking to the head, ver. 8; fifthly, The wife beloved, and she to be joyfully lived withal, all the days of thy vanity, ver. 9.

*Reason 1.* From God's acceptance of our work, ver. 7.

*Reason 2.* From the portion allotted to us of God, ver. 9, especially in the joyful fellowship of his wife.

2. The good that we are in any way able to do, he exhorteth to do by a reason from the vacancy and cessation of all employment and business of mind and hand in the grave; and the grave described by our adjnct act, or walking to it, ver. 10. Solomon here speaketh, not in the person of an epicure, but in the name of the Holy Ghost.

*Reason 1.* From the like speeches in the like sense spoken often before in his own person, chap. ii. 24, iii. 12, 13, 22, v. 18, 19, and viii. 15.

*Reason 2.* Epicures are not wont to speak so religiously, first, Of life as vanity, which Solomon here doth feelingly, ver. 9; secondly, Of the days of our life as God's gift, ver. 9; thirdly, Of the course of our life as a journey to the grave, ver. 10; fourthly, Of our love to our wives, and fellowship with them constantly, avoiding strange lusts, ver. 9.

*Obj.* But garments always white, and wife always joyed in, it seemeth to deny fasts at any time.

*Ans.* Solomon speaketh not of extraordinary times and duties, but of ordinary course.

*Doct. 1.* The uncertainty of outward events calleth all men to take all the good, and to do all the good that God putteth into their hands all the days of their life. Of the former part now, Eccles. iii. 12, 13, 22, and v. 18, 19; Acts ii. 46, and xiv. 17, *a minore*, yet it holdeth in heathens also, Ps. civ. 15. The Jews in cheerfulness used white garments, Luke xiv. 19; Prov. v. 19, for joyful love of wife. Times of humiliation are not ordinary, so also times of apostasy are excepted, Hosea ix. 1.

*Reasons of the former part of the doctrine:* 1.

from the contrary walking of wicked men, fretting and vexing themselves with the promiscuous dispensation of outward events, and filling their hearts with wickedness and madness upon that occasion, ver. 3-6.

*Reason 2.* From God's acceptance of our work herein. It is acceptable to God that we should use cheerfully what God giveth freely and cheerfully, Ps. cxlv. 16; Deut. xxvi. 14; for, first, It is an improvement and use of the creature to that end God gave them, Ps. civ. 15, and so a fulfilling of one part of the third commandment. Secondly, The contrary is weariness to God, not to accept and use the gifts he offereth, Isa. vii. 10-13. In which respects not only godly men, but all men are bound to cheerful acceptance of God's goodness, without sadness and mourning.

*Reason 3.* From the portion which God giveth us in this life for our outward man, as his grace for the inner man, 2 Cor. xii. 9: first, It is God's gift and admeasurement, Eccles. v. 18; his talents are to be employed. Secondly, It is our substance, supplying our wants and losses, Acts xx. 24; he is a poor man in the midst of abundance that wanteth this, Eccles. v. 19, 20. Thirdly, It is that by occupying of which we increase our estates, Neh. ix. 15. In special manner this to be a man's portion, is attributed to a man's joyful life with his wife, ver. 7. As who should say, The best portion a man can have with a wife, is a joyful life with her all his days, as if he had no portion without this, whatsoever wealth, or friends, or beauty, or parts he had with her. Without this joyfulness with her, it were no portion at all, Prov. x. 18. It is a portion, first, As given of God, Eccles. v. 19; Prov. xix. 14; secondly, For a stay and support of his life, Gen. ii. 18; thirdly, To employ for his further advantage, Prov. xxxi. 11, 12.

*Reason 4.* From the wearisome vanity of this life, without making use of the comforts of it, ver. 9; Ps. lxxviii. 33. Vanity, first, Of brevity, Ps. xxxix. 5; secondly, Of vanity or emptiness, Ps. xxxix. 6; Isa. lv. 2; thirdly, Of disappointment or frustration, Isa. xlix. 4; fourthly, Corruption, Rom. viii. 20, 21.

*Reason 5.* From the necessary support of a man in his labours, ver. 9. This comfortable use of the creatures is as oil to the wheels, Neh. viii. 10.



*Reason 6.* From the gift of every day of our life to us from God's hand, ver. 9; Job xiv. 5; Ps. xxxi. 15; Acts xvii. 26; therefore every day some refreshing.

*Use 1.* To teach the children of God to take Solomon's counsel here; for to them it is chiefly given, whose work God accepteth, in seeking reconciliation with God, and fellowship in his Christ and kingdom, Mat. vi. 33; 1 Tim. iv. 3; Titus i. 15; Hosea ix. 1.

*Rules to do it safely.* Observe, first, Two rules of piety: prayer before, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5, and thanksgiving after, Deut. viii. 10. Secondly, A rule of justice; thine own, not the bread of idleness, oppression, deceit, Prov. xxxi. 27, iv. 17, and xx. 17; 2 Kings iv. 7. Thirdly, A rule of sobriety, Luke xxi. 34. Fourthly, A rule of wisdom, 1. Regarding the end of meat and drink, which is strength and cheerfulness, Eccles. x. 17. Of apparel, is beside, (1.) Necessity; (2.) Comeliness; (3.) Adorning the inner man of the heart, 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4. 2. Regarding future times and posterity, Prov. xxi. 20. 3. In frugality, saving remnants, John vi. 12. Fifthly, A rule of charity and mercy in ministering part to others that want necessaries, Neh. viii. 10.

*Use 2.* To stir up Christian yoke-fellows especially to this duty.

*Means.* First, Uprightness of heart, Job xx. 5; secondly, Care of mutual pleasing, 1 Cor. vii. 33, 34.

*Use 3.* To take heed of grieving God's Spirit, which taketh such care for our refreshing, Eph. iv. 30.

*Use 4.* To stir up to a Christian state and course; it is not a way of melancholy, but seasonable cheerfulness.

*Use 5.* To teach us to look at this life as vanity, and all the days of it, and therefore to lay up an enduring substance in the life to come, Heb. x. 34, and patiently to bear many disappointments in this life.

*Use 6.* To look at every day as a gift from God, Lam. iii. 23, and therefore to employ it to his advantage.

Ver. 10. *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor*

*knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*

The doctrine from this and the three former verses was this: That the uncertainty of outward events calleth all men to take all the good, and to do all the good that God putteth into their hands all the days of our life. Of the former part, to wit, of taking all the good, hath been spoken in the three former verses. It remains now to speak of doing all the good that God putteth into our hands all the days of our life.

'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do' implieth three things: first, That which falleth within our calling, or commission, or authority, as Gen. xvi. 6. Unlawful things, or things lawful, but out of our calling, are not to be done though they be in our hand, Micah ii. 1. Secondly, That which falleth within the compass of our power and ability, as the phrase is used, Gen. xxxi. 29; otherwise, though it be in our calling, yet having<sup>1</sup> power we may omit it, 2 Sam. iii. 39. Thirdly, That which God giveth us opportunity and occasion to do, as the phrase is used, 1 Sam. x. 7; Gal. vi. 10; Eccles. xi. 2, 6.

*Reason 1.* From the vacancy and cessation of all business in the grave, whither thou goest, as in the text.

No work, no performance, or accomplishment of any business, no device. The Hebrew word signifieth two things: first, A device or cunning engine, 2 Chron. xxvi. 15; secondly, An account, as Eccles. vii. 27. Both here meant, in the grave there is no ability or opportunity either to devise or invent any good, or to make up or cast up any accounts.

Nor knowledge to understand truth or falsehood, good or evil; nor wisdom to consider of any good ends, or of any good means leading thereto.

*Reason 2.* From the love which we owe to God, and the measure of it, which is with all our might, Deut. vi. 5.

*Reason 3.* From our stewardship, and God's lordship, of that which God putteth into our hands. The work is the Lord's as our sovereign master, 1 Cor. xvi. 10. Church work, Jer. xlvi. 10; warlike execution, 1 Sam. xiv. 45; wrought with God, Col. iii. 23, 24; servants' work; we are but factors for him. There is a heavy curse upon negligence in his work, Jer. xlvi. 10.

<sup>1</sup> Qu. "not having?"—Ed.

*Reason 1.* From the Lord's pleasure to reserve this as a sovereign prerogative in his own power, Acts i. 7.

*Reason 2.* To train up his servants to a child-like dependence on God's will, James iv. 14, 15; also to a watchful preparation for sudden changes, Mark xiii. 35, 36; Luke xii. 35-40; likewise to fruitfulness in doing all the good we can find to do for the present, Eccles. ix. 10, and xi. 2, 6; besides, to the obedience of faith, and to follow God blindfold. Foreknowledge of cross events hindereth obedience, Jonah iv. 2; foreknowledge of good events maketh obedience mercenary, as John vi. 26.

*Reason 3.* To surprise wicked men with sudden judgments, as birds in an evil snare, and fishes in a net, Ps. xxxvii. 13, and lxxiii. 18, 19; Dan. v. 5, 6.

*Use 1.* For a sad warning to wicked men not to continue in such an estate; they know not what shall befall them, what times shall come upon them; but what evil doth come will be sudden calamity, Job xxi. 13; 1 Thes. v. 2, 3.

*Use 2.* To reprove the vanity and impiety of such as consult with witches about the events of things, and the times that should come over them. What got Saul by the Witch of Endor, or Haman by sorcery, or Balak by Balaam?

*Use 3.* To learn us a holy use of our ignorance of our times, according to God's ends mentioned in the second reason.

Ver. 13. *This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me.*

Ver. 14. *There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it.*

Ver. 15. *Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.*

Ver. 16. *Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.*

Ver. 17. *The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.*

Ver. 18. *Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.*

Solomon having observed in ver. 11 that the

battle is not to the strong, bread is not to the wise, in these two verses he giveth an instance of the disappointment of great strength, by such a subject as was least able to resist it, to wit, by weak means in a weak subject, and of the neglect of such a wise man. The weak subject is, first, A little city; secondly, Few men in it. The great strength against it: first, There came a great king against it; secondly, He besieged it; thirdly, He built great bulwarks against it, ver. 14. The weak means; a poor wise man found in the city, and by his wisdom delivered the city, ver. 15; which act of the poor man is amplified by the slender requital of that poor man, expressed in an argument *a diversis*, 'yet no man remembered that poor man,' ver. 15. All which passages Solomon setteth forth, first, By the adjunct wisdom, great wisdom, which he observed in it, ver. 13; secondly, By the wise observations which he gathered from it, first, That wisdom is better than strength; secondly, That a poor man's wisdom is neglected, ver. 16; thirdly, That the words of the wise are more heard in quiet than the cry of a ruler among fools, ver. 17; fourthly, That wisdom is better than weapons of war; fifthly, That one sinner destroyeth much good, ver. 18.

*Doct.* It is a matter of much wisdom, or a matter affording much wisdom to the observers of it, a little city of small strength, and few inhabitants, besieged by a great king with strong bulwarks, to be preserved and delivered by one poor man, and yet the poor man to be neglected. So Abel, in Beth-maachah, by a wise woman, 2 Sam. xx. 15, &c.; Samaria, by Elisha, 2 Kings vii. 1, &c.; Jerusalem, by Isaiah, 2 Kings xix. 2, &c.; Thebes, by Epaminondas; Lampsacum, from Alexander the Great, by Anaximenes; Syracuse, by Archimedes, from Marcellus; Alexandria, by Anatolius, from the Roman forces. See Valer. Max. lib. vii. c. 3; Euseb. lib. vii. c. 26.

*Reasons* of this power of wisdom: first, God's pleasure to magnify and exalt gifts of mind above gifts of body, as the soul itself is more excellent than the body, Prov. xxi. 22; Eccles. vii. 19; secondly, From the wisdom of spiritual wisdom, to intrust God with the cause of the city itself, 2 Chron. xx. 12, 15; Prov. xviii. 10, and xxx. 26.

*Reason* of neglect of the wise poor: first, the envy of the rich; secondly, The conceit of his want of

means to get any wisdom but by some chance happening on a good course, Mat. xiii. 54, 55 ; thirdly, From the vanity incident to all the good things of man by the fall, Eccles. i. 2 ; fourthly, From the wisdom of God to prevent a poor wise man's pride.

*Use 1.* To teach wise men to observe the greater wisdom in the greater passages of human affairs by weaker means, ver. 13. Where God soweth much, we should reap the more.

*Use 2.* To teach us wisdom is better than strength or weapons of war, ver. 16, 18.

*Use 3.* To observe the neglected condition of a poor wise man, ver. 15, 16.

*Use 4.* To observe a time of silence and quietness, wherein to utter words of wisdom.

*Use 5.* To teach us that as one poor wise man may do his country much good, so may a sinner by his wickedness do his country much hurt, ver. 18. Achan did much hurt, Joshua vii. 11, 12 ; Jonah also, though a good man, yet erring out of the way, and wandering in sin, Jonah i. 11.

*Reason.* From the contagion of sin, 1 Cor. v. 6. The troublers of Israel are the sinners in Zion, 1 Kings xviii. 17, 18.

## CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1. *Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour : so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.*

Solomon having shewed the vanity incident to the wisdom of a poor man—to wit, first, To be neglected, not heard ; secondly, If heard, and followed, yet to be forgotten, chap. ix. 15, 16. In this verse he sheweth the vanity incident to the wise man, who is also honourable, to a man in reputation for wisdom and honour, which is, to be blemished with a little folly, and that little folly to be like a dead fly corrupting a precious box of ointment. So this little folly to corrupt and blemish the excellency of wisdom in an honourable person.

In the text three things are compared with three : first, A man of reputation for wisdom and honour with the precious ointment of an apothecary ; secondly, A little folly with a dead fly ; thirdly, The evil which a little folly doth to such a wise, honourable

man, with the evil which a dead fly doth to precious ointment, which is double: **יבאיש**, causeth it to putrify, **יעב**, causeth it to send forth a putrified savour.

*Doct.* As an honourable wise man is like an apothecary's precious ointment, and a little folly like to a dead fly ; so is the corruption which a dead fly causeth in that ointment like the hurt which a little folly doth to an honourable wise man.

The apothecary's precious ointment excelleth, first, In quality, as odour, John xii. 3, perfuming a whole house, Cant. i. 3, and colour, Ps. civ. 15 ; secondly, In manner of skilful confection ; thirdly, In efficacy or virtue, for healing and refreshing, Prov. xxvii. 9. So doth the wisdom of an honourable wise man excel, first, In odour ; it sendeth a sweet perfume all the country over, 1 Kings iii. 28 ; secondly, In colour, causing the face to shine like an ointment, Eccles. viii. 1 ; Acts vi. 15 ; thirdly, In manner of skilful confection ; fourthly, In efficacy and virtue, Prov. xxvii. 9.

A little folly is like a dead fly ; like, first, In quantity ; both little. Secondly, In quality ; both of them, 1. Base and contemptible ; 2. Unprofitable ; 3. Noisome and troublesome, Ps. lxxviii. 45 ; Exod. viii. 24. A living fly is no better ; a dead fly baser, (as in alike, Eccles. ix.) As a dead fly causeth a precious ointment to putrify, and to send forth an evil savour, so doth a little folly corrupt and dishonour an honourable wise man.

Pineda marvelled how a dead fly should so much corrupt a precious ointment, seeing he found it not so in his country. But there is a difference, first, Of flies, which in eastern countries are many of them more venomous and noisome, Ps. lxxviii. 45 ; secondly, Of ointments, which in those countries are more pure and precious, which in ours are more gross and greasy ; they anointed their heads and faces, Mat. vi. 17 ; Eccles. ix. 7.

Solomon's folly in loving strange women corrupted his spirit to take them as wives and concubines ; then to tolerate their religion ; then to adorn it with countenance of goodly temples, and with maintenance of priests and sacrifices. Whence the mount Olivet, on which their temples were built, was called the mountain of corruption, 2 Kings xxiii. 13 ; yea, it corrupted all Israel and Judah.

A pang of folly in David so weakened his reputation, as offended all Israel with the savour of it, and caused a great rebellion against him.

A little folly in Asa banishing the prophet, in Jehoshaphat making affinity with Ahab, in Uzziah offering incense, in Hezekiah shewing his treasures, in Josiah going to war against Pharaoh-Necho, corrupted and dishonoured the government of them all.

*Reason* 1. From a more observable defilement of the most pure and precious things, as in the purest clear linen the smallest spot is soon espied.

*Reason* 2. From the vanity which God seeth it meet the best gifts and parts should be stained withal, Isa. xxiii. 9.

*Use* 1. To exhort men of place and honour to seek after wisdom; both together maketh them as precious ointment. Folly in dignity is a great deformity, Eccles. x. 6; Prov. xxvi. 1, 8.

*Use* 2. To teach wise men not to bear with themselves in little follies, much less in great.

*Use* 3. To teach wise and honourable men to make account of an hour and power of temptation, and to deny and suspect themselves, that God may be pleased to keep them from falling shamefully.

Ver. 2. *A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left.*

Ver. 3. *Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.*

These words prevent an objection which might arise from the former.

*Obj.* If the wisdom of the poor and of the rich are subject to such vanities, (as have been shewed in the end of the former chapter, and in the beginning of this,) then where is the excellency of wisdom above folly?

*Ans.* In two things: first, In placing of the heart. The heart of the wise is at his right hand; of the fool at his left, ver. 2; secondly, In the failing of a fool's heart in his ordinary course and way, and thereby bewraying himself openly to be a fool, ver. 3.

*Doct.* 1. There is a great difference between a wise man and a fool, in the placing and carrying of their hearts. It is not to be thought there is any observable difference in the heart of a wise man and of a

fool, for then some anatomists would have observed it; but the heart is put metonymically for the mind, judgment, and will of a man; and the right and left hand are put metaphorically. The meaning is, first, A wise man doth not aim at sinister ends in his work, Mat. vi. 3; he aimeth sincerely at the glory of God, and the good of himself and others. A foolish pharisee, Christ calleth them so, Mat. xxiii. 17, 19, he doth all to be seen of men, Mat. vi. 2, 5, 16; 2 Kings x. 16, or for some selfish end or other. Secondly, A wise man carrieth his thoughts and works with strength and dexterity. As the right hand is counted stronger than the left, so what is wrought with strength is attributed to the right hand, Ps. cxviii. 15, 16, and cxviii. 1. Thirdly, A wise man may be said to have his heart at his right hand, in that he taketh all things in the fairest and best sense from God or man, Ps. cxix. 75; Mat. i. 19; on the contrary, a fool makes a sinister construction of that which is well meant from God or man, 2 Sam. x. 2, 3; Eccles. viii. 11; Ps. l. 21; Rom. ii. 4, 5. Fourthly, The right hand is a place of pre-eminence and blessing, Gen. xlviii. 14, 17-19; in which respect a wise man taketh ways of preferment to highest honour before the Most High, Prov. xv. 24, and x. 20, 21, and xii. 26; Mat. xxv. 33. And for carrying on their hearts in their course of life, there is great difference between the wise and the fool. The fool, in his ordinary and daily course of life, which, in ver. 3, is called his way, his heart faileth him, and faileth him so far that he expresseth and discovereth his folly openly to all that observe him. Not that Solomon here speaketh of a natural fool, that, as he walketh in the streets, discovereth to all that he is a fool by his looks and gesture; Solomon seldom or never speaketh of them in all his writings. But he speaketh of a carnal, wicked man, destitute both of spiritual wisdom, and wisdom fit for his calling; and the words may, according to the text, be translated, 'Yea also, as he that is a fool walketh in his way, his heart faileth him, and he saith to all men he is a fool,' Ps. xxxvi. 1; 2 Tim. iii. 9; 1 Tim. v. 24, 25.

*Reason* 1. From the deep deceitfulness and weakness of the heart, unless the Lord dwell in it, strengthen it, keep it, and guide it, Jer. xvii. 9. God is the strength of the godly, wise man's heart,

Ps. lxxiii. 26. But in a hypocrite, much more in an open wicked man, his heart is empty at his best; and being empty, Satan will soon repossess him, and hurry him to open offences and miscarriages, Mat. xii. 44, 45.

*Reason 2.* From the failing of the heart the way will be openly vain and foolish and wicked, text.

*Use 1.* To teach us not to neglect wisdom, though a poor man's wisdom be despised, and he forgotten, and an honourable man's wisdom is corrupted with some dead and stinking fly, some time or other. For though this be true, yet there is great pre-eminence in a wise man above a fool, as both these verses shew.

*Use 2.* For trial of a wise man and a foolish, according to the different placing of a man's heart on his right hand or left. (This to be amplified according to the estate of the present auditory.)

*Use 3.* To teach us not to trust in our own hearts; we are then fools, Prov. xxviii. 26. Our hearts are empty naturally; and empty hearts will fail us and proclaim our folly. It is good to have our hearts filled with Christ, with his Spirit, and with his grace, Eph. iii. 17; Heb. xiii. 9.

Ver. 4. *If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences.*

Solomon having observed, that one dead fly and one little strain of folly staineth the reputation and honour of wise men of high place, he proceedeth in the rest of this chapter to declare what those dead flies or vanities be in particular throughout this chapter. But to prevent disloyal thoughts, which thereupon might arise in the heart or carriage of subjects towards their governors, he hedgeth in his discourse with a twofold direction and instruction of loyalty: 1. One in the beginning of his discourse, ver. 4; 2. The other in the end of it, ver. 20.

Parts of the verse: 1. A direction to a right and loyal carriage of a man's self in case the spirit of the ruler rise up against a man; if so, yet leave not thy place. 2. A reason of it, from the benefit of a better course; for yielding pacifieth great offences.

*Doct. 1.* The rising of the spirit of a prince against a subject, doth not give leave to a subject to leave his place, but calleth him rather to lay down his spirit. The spirit of a prince is not a sudden pas-

sion, but a habitual bent of displeasure; (for spirit is a habitual bent, Prov. xviii. 14; Num. v. 14.) His place is not meant of place of habitation chiefly, for in times of deep and bitter displeasure it is lawful to leave the country, 1 Kings xix. 1-3, &c.; John iv. 1, 3. Nor the place of a man's office, if the office be civil, and such as a man may lay down and leave without sin against God, but detriment to himself; for if the leaving of a man's civil office may prevent the danger of his life, it were better laid down with safety than kept with displeasure and peril. But by place is meant the relation of a subject, his loyalty, 1 Sam. xxiv. 4, and xxvi. 11. Place is by the Septuagint translated *τάξις*, Job xxxviii. 12.

*Reason 1.* From the ground and foundation of authority and subjection between prince and people, which is, first, An ordinance of God, Rom. xiii. 1, 2; secondly, The covenant of the people confirmed by the oath of God between them, Eccles. viii. 2; 2 Sam. v. 3; 2 Kings xi. 17. Until therefore the body of the people do find such great cause of complaint of their ruler as to have broken the fundamental articles of their covenant, the ruler's transgression of his course and duty to the subject is no cause of discharge of the subject's duty to him.

*Reason 2.* From the benefit and efficacy of yielding; it pacifieth great wrath; text. Yielding in soft answers, Prov. xv. 1, and in actual submission to his will, Prov. xxv. 15.

*Use 1.* To teach us not to rise up in our spirits against rulers, if they should rise up against us. It is not lawful for us to leave our place of subjection and loyalty, which dissolveth the relation or the exercise of it. Which argueth it is not lawful for servants to run from their masters, for therein they dissolve their relations, Gen. xvi. 6, &c.; 1 Pet. ii. 18, &c., unless there be peril of life or limb to the servant.

*Quest.* Whether may it be lawful for a state to rise against their king or ruler?

*Ans.* First, Not for every injury to the state, which may stand with the safety of it; secondly, In atrocious evils they may oppose him, 1 Sam. xiv. 44, 45, and xxii. 17; thirdly, Tyrants *sine Titulo*, they may depose, as Athaliah, 2 Kings xi. 12, 16; fourthly, Subverters of the safety of the state, they

are first by all gentle means to reduce and heal. If all other remedies be hopeless, they may *Curare, ne quid respublica detrimenti capiat.*

*Use 2.* To quiet and subject our hearts to a holy yielding unto God in all afflictions, Ps. cxix. 75; 1 Sam. iii. 18; 2 Kings xx. 19.

*Ver. 5.* *There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler.*

*Ver. 6.* *Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich set in low place.*

*Ver. 7.* *I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.*

In these verses Solomon noteth the first of those dead flies which putrify the reputation and wisdom of princes, and that is the misemployment of their favours and honours. Where,

First, The men advanced are: 1. Fools, yea, folly itself; 2. Poor men, in opposition to rich; 3. Servants. Those debased are, 1. Wise, in opposition to fools; 2. Rich not only in outward estate, but in parts and gifts fit for government; 3. Princes.

Secondly, The misemployment or misplacing is, 1. Folly in great dignity, rich in low place; 2. Princes walking as servants, servants riding on horseback like princes.

Thirdly, The cause of this; the face or countenance of the prince to the one, against the other.

Fourthly, The vanity of it; it is, 1. An error; 2. An evil error.

*Doct. 1.* It is an error, and an evil error, that proceedeth from the face of a ruler, the advancement of mean and weak men, and the debasement of able and noble persons. Doeg an Edomite advanced, 1 Sam. xxii. 9; Haman an Amalekite, Esther iii. 1.

*Reason* of this error: first, Fellowship of princes in their education with vain persons, 1 Kings xii. 8. It was a great error in Solomon to make no better choice of his son's school-fellows and play-fellows; secondly, Princes' indulgent respect to servants brought up under them, Prov. xxix. 21; thirdly, The servitude of some princes to their passions and lusts, and the serviceableness of some base men to princes herein; so Doeg to Saul's cruelty and enmity against David and the priests, 1 Sam. xxii. 9, &c.

*Reason* of the evil of the error: first, It is uncomely, Prov. xix. 10, and xxvi. 1; as if the weak

and uncomely members of the body should be set in highest place, open to view. Secondly, It is burdensome to the whole estate of a commonwealth, the rule of a servant, Prov. xxx. 21, 22.

*Reason* of the proceeding of this error from the face of the ruler; from the efficacy of the king's face in the advancement or debasement of persons about him. It is not the desert of an unworthy person that honoureth him, but only the king's countenance, Prov. xvi. 15.

*Use 1.* To teach men to prevent this error by choosing for their children good companions, as much as may be, at school, at play.

*Use 2.* To teach our people here, whose government is elective, to make choice of men of greatest worth for wisdom, for sufficiency, for birth.

*Use 3.* To look at it as more safe for the commonwealth to put the eminency of honour and power rather in the hand of the magistracy than in the commonalty.

*Use 4.* To teach us to prefer God and his ways above ourselves and our wills. He is the prince of princes, our wisdom is folly.

*Ver. 8.* *He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.*

*Ver. 9.* *Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.*

*Ver. 10.* *If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength.*

In these verses Solomon reckoneth up in pithy and proverbial speeches and parables other dead flies found in princes and statesmen, though otherwise in reputation for their wisdom and honour. The former verses declared the first dead fly, the misemployment of princes' favours and honours, ver. 8, 9, 10. The second is the digging of a pit for innocent and well deserving men to fall into, an unusual practice in statesmen, but dangerous; otherwise digging of a pit for a wicked guilty man to fall into is safe, 1 Kings ii. 36-46. The third is breaking a hedge—that is, some defence set about church or commonwealth, whether counsel, laws, or guard of military men, ver. 8. Fourthly, Removing stones—that is, massy and unwieldy persons, as Zech. xii. 3. Fifthly, Cleaving of wood—that is, making division between persons firmly and closely compacted, ver.

9. Sixthly, Blunt affronts put upon people by a weak arm ; it is as striking with blunt iron, without much strength put to, ver. 10. To help this he directeth to the use of wisdom, which is profitable to direct, to set an edge upon business, ver. 10.

*Doct.* 1. The digging of a pit, the breaking of a hedge, the removing of stones, the cleaving of wood, and blunt affronts upon the people by a weak arm, are all of them dead flies usually found in statesmen, but always dangerous.

The digging of a pit, to wit, for an innocent or well-deserving man to fall into, Ps. vii. 15. So Saul plotted against David, 1 Sam. xviii. 17, but fell into that pit himself, 1 Sam. xxxi. 3, 6. So Haman prepared a gallows for Mordecai, but was hanged on it himself, Esther vii. 9, 10.

The breaking of a hedge is the violating of some defence set for the guard or safety of a people or state, as a hedge is set about a pasture of cattle. Such a hedge, dangerous to be broken, are laws and liberties, Jer. xxxiv. 11–17 ; counsellors and parliaments, 1 Kings xii. 13 ; and faithful and valiant guard of military men, 1 Sam. xviii. 13, and xix. 1.

Removing of stones, that is, of massy and unwieldy persons, 1 Sam. xix. 11, and xviii. 13 ; Prov. xxvi. 27 ; Zech. xii. 3.

Cleaving of wood, making divisions between persons firmly and closely compacted, may soon endanger him that doth it.

Blunt iron, the edge not whetted, requireth more strength ; and if strength be wanting, the blunt stroke or affront is dangerous, 1 Kings xii. 13, 14.

*Reason* 1. Of their falling into a pit that dig it, from God's righteousness and wisdom to take the wily in their own craftiness, Job v. 12, 13 ; Prov. iii. 29.

*Reason* 2. Of a serpent's biting them that break the hedge, from God's establishment of ancient bounds, Prov. xxiii. 10, 11, and from the old serpent's power when men go out of their calling, as in our callings angels guard us, Ps. xci. 11, 12.

*Reason* 3. Of hurt by removing stones ; it is a tempting of God to presume beyond our strength.

*Reason* 4. Of hurt by cleaving wood, from God's hatred of sowing discord, Prov. vi. 16, 19.

*Reason* 5. Of hurt by blunt affronts, from God's wrathful resistance of the proud, Job xl. 11, 12.

*Use* 1. To learn statesmen wisdom to direct all their affairs.

Ver. 10. *But wisdom is profitable to direct.*

Ver. 11. *Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment ; and a babbler is no better.*

But wisdom is profitable or excellent to direct ; if the serpent do bite without enchantment, there is no profit to the master of the tongue. In the former verse Solomon had observed sundry vanities, as it were indeed flies, found in men of reputation for wisdom and honour ; and here, before he proceeds to declare any more of these dead flies, he interfereth a remedy to prevent such miscarriages, which is wisdom.

But wisdom, saith he, is profitable to direct as an antidote against all the former dead flies ; which he proveth, 1. By the unprofitableness of words, when hurt is done. If the serpent bite without enchantment, in vain are all great words, sweet words, afterwards, ver. 11. 2. By the effect of wisdom, and the words thereof. The words of a wise man are grace, ver. 12 ; but the lips of a fool, first, They swallow up the speaker, ver. 12. Secondly, They breathe, 1. In the beginning foolishness ; 2. In the end mischievous madness, ver. 13. Thirdly, They multiply many matters ; for so the word signifieth many projects, and those such as leave men doubtful and in suspense what will be the end or issue of all, ver. 14. Fourthly, They weary themselves and one another in their undue courses and projects. And this amplified by the cause thereof, their ignorance of the principles or highway road, broad way of government, expressed in a proverbial speech, because he knoweth not, that is, none of them knoweth the way to the city, ver. 16.

The 11th verse I turn, If the serpent bite without enchantment, there is no profit to the master of the tongue ; for so the words properly signify, and are so translated, Eccles. ii. 11. There is no profit, and the master of the tongue is a man skilful in speech, able and powerful in speech ; as the master of dreams, Gen. xxxvii. 19, is a man skilful in dreams ; a master of wing, Prov. i. 17, is skilful

in flying; a master of horns, Dan. viii. 6, is powerful in his horns. And so Mr Perkins translateth this verse in his discourse of witchcraft, chap. iv. sect. 1.

*Doct.* Wisdom is profitable to direct to the right avoidance of all such dead flies as are usually found dangerous in statesmen of reputation. Or, wisdom is of excellent use, or profitable, &c.; for the word signifieth excellency as well as profit, and so it is translated, Eccles. vii. 12. Hence Solomon prayed for this gift of all other, as most requisite for government, 1 Kings iii. 9.

*Reason 1.* Wisdom discerneth and chooseth the right end of government, which is, the punishment of evil-doers, the praise of the good, Rom. xiii. 4; 1 Tim. ii. 2. I say discerneth and chooseth; for wisdom is not in the head only, as discerning, but in the heart, as choosing the best good; else he that discerneth good, but chooseth it not, is still a fool.

*Reason 2.* Wisdom discerneth and chooseth the best means tending and leading to those ends; as, 1. Righteous laws, Deut. iv. 6, 8; 2. Wise counsellors, 1 Kings xii. 6; 3. Just judges, 2 Chron. xix. 5-7; Ps. lxxxii. 2, 5; 4. Valiant soldiers, 1 Sam. xvi. 18; 1 Chron. xii. 8; 1 Sam. xiv. 52; 5. Diligent improvement, first, Of earth by husbandry, Eccles. v. 9; Prov. xiv. 4; secondly, Of sea by merchandise, 1 Kings x. 22, 23, 28, 29; both which are wrapped up in the cunning artificer or artist, Isa. iii. 3.

*Reason 3.* Wisdom considereth the estate of the people, what it will willingly bear, and what it is able to bear, 1 Kings xii. 7; Neh. v. 18.

*Reason 4.* Wisdom deriveth all its light and strength from the prince of wisdom, who is wisdom itself, the wisdom of the Father, Prov. viii. 12, 15, and so denieth itself, Prov. iii. 5-7.

*Use 1.* To teach magistrates to lay aside all false guides in steering the course of government. It is not wit that is profitable to direct, Eccles. iv. 13, but wisdom; nor favour to favourites unfit for government, Eccles. x. 6, 7; nor strength, Eccles. ix. 16.

*Use 2.* To teach magistrates to improve their wisdom in all the former particulars mentioned in the reasons.

*Doct.* As a serpent biting without enchantment

cannot afterwards be healed with skilful words, so neither can a mischief befallen a prince or people for want of wisdom be afterwards healed by great or sweet words. The Scripture speaketh of some serpents which will not be charmed, Ps. lviii. 4, 5; Jer. viii. 17; but it implieth that some may be and are charmed by enchanters, joining societies cunningly with the devil, as the phrase is, Ps. lviii. 5, and when they are not charmed, then they sting without interruption and without remedy many times. So, when a prince hath not used wisdom to direct his affairs, he may be stung with a mortal mischief to himself and the state, and then skilful words will do no good. Rehoboam neglecting to charm the people's discontent beforehand, 1 Kings xii. 13-19, afterwards in vain came Adoram, what words soever he gave them to gather up tribute, ver. 18, yea, in vain were Abijam's savoury words afterwards, 2 Chron. xiii. 4-13.

*Reason.* From the strong and venomous and malignant inflammation which harsh and foolish words may kindle in an understanding and free people. It was a malignant inflammation which brake forth from the people incensed, when they rejected the seed of David, 1 Kings xii. 16.

*Use 1.* To observe the power of charmers by their covenant with Satan, who hath power over serpents, and therefore they are called the power of the enemy, Luke x. 19. Yet this power is limited; he cannot heal after biting, at least could not then, though his commission may be enlarged since; neither can he charm some serpents, Ps. lviii. 5; Jer. viii. 17. How much less can he charm the seed of the woman without special commission, and when he doth bite them, it is but the heel. Gen. iii. 15.

*Use 2.* To shew us the mighty virtue and efficacy of wisdom, that can charm malignant and venomous minds.

Ver. 12. *The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.*

Ver. 13. *The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.*

Ver. 14. *A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be: and what shall be after him, who can tell him?*



Ver. 15. *The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.*

Coherence, see in ver. 10. These words (the words of the wise man in grace) are a reason of what he said, ver. 10, that wisdom is profitable to direct, taken from the grace of a wise man's words, which maketh the argument of force, howsoever grace be taken.

*Doct.* 1. The words of the wise (even of the wise statesmen) are grace. Of statesmen Solomon here speaketh, from the beginning of this chapter to the end; and he speaketh of such wisdom as is profitable to direct in state affairs, ver. 10. Their words may be said to be grace, first, As flowing from the grace and favour of God, Ps. xlv. 2. Secondly, As ministering grace to the people, Eph. iv. 29; 1 Kings viii. 55-61; 1 Chron. xxix. 18; at least expressing the grace and favour of God, and the prince's favour and grace to them, Ps. cxxii. 6-9; Esther x. 3; seeking their wealth, speaking peace. Thirdly, As finding acceptance with the people, Prov. x. 32; 2 Sam. iii. 59; Esther x. 3; 'accepted of the multitude of his brethren.'

*Doct.* 2. The words of fools, especially of foolish statesmen, the beginning of them is foolishness, the end of them is madness, pernicious, and mischievous to themselves and others. And their ways are variable and of doubtful event, and wearisome even to themselves and all men, Esther iii. 8, 9. Haman began his speech with a foolish complaint against better men than himself, accusing them of that for a vice which was a virtue, (to live a separate course of life from the vain world, Num. xxiii. 9,) but the end of his speech was pernicious and mischievous madness to the Jews, Esther iii. 9, and to himself. It swallowed up himself, Esther vii. 4-6, &c.; 1 Kings xii. 14, it was a foolish beginning to acknowledge his father's rigour, but the end of his speech was mischievous madness to threaten more rigour. Variable in their projects, Jer. ii. 23, 36, 37; wearisome ways, Hab. ii. 13; Isa. xlvii. 13, and lvii. 9, 10.

*Reason* 1. From the ignorance of such persons (foolish statesmen) of the principles of civil government, implied in that proverbial speech, that they know not the way to the city, which is wont to be a broad roadway, but these discern it not, like men that have lost their way, Ps. cvii. 4, 40.

*Reason* 2. From God's rejection of them and their ways, Ps. cvii. 40; Jer. ii. 37.

*Use* 1. To teach magistrates to speak words of grace.

*Use* 2. To shew the folly and danger of foolish statesmen.

Ver. 16. *Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!*

Ver. 17. *Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!*

Ver. 18. *By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.*

Ver. 19. *A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things.*

In these words, over and above all the former, Solomon observeth two other vanities incident to statesmen, viz., childishness and intemperancy, or epicurism; which he amplifieth, first, By the adjunct, woeful estate of a land, where so it is, ver. 16; secondly, By the contrary blessed estate of such a land whose king is the son of nobles, and princes eat in due season, for strength, not for excess, ver. 17; thirdly, By the effects; which are, 1. Remissness in government, called here much slothfulness and idleness of hands, and (that which easily floweth from thence) the decay of the state of the commonwealth, expressed under the comparison of the decay of the house, ver. 18; 2. Prodigal expense of money, which groweth from their intemperancy in feasts, as the former did from childishness of government, ver. 19.

*Doct.* It is a woeful estate of a country or commonwealth where the king is childish and the princes epicures, or intemperate. On the contrary, the state is blessed where the king is noble, and the princes temperate.

The word translated woe doth signify an island, and because islands were at first more desolate, and less inhabited than the continent, therefore they called the doleful fowls that lodged in that island by the name of islands; such fowls as do not affect the company of men nor beasts, as screech-owls, and bitterns, and ostriches, &c., and so the word cometh to signify woeful or woe, such a kind of woe as accom-

panieth desolate islands—desolation itself; Woe to thee, O land, whose king is childish, and whose princes are riotous, they shall be as a desolate island, an habitation for screech-owls and every doleful bird.

A child, not so much in years, for Solomon himself was very young when he came to the crown; David saith of him, He was young and tender, 1 Chron. xxix. 1. Joash was but seven years old when he began to reign, yet he ruled well all the days of his youth, from the good counsel of his uncle Jehoiada, 2 Chron. xxiv. 1. Uzziah was but sixteen years old, yet he reigned well in his young time, by the good counsel of Zechariah, 2 Chron. xxvi. 3-5. Josiah was but eight years old, and he surpassed them all, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 1. Only Manasseh, of all the young kings, beginning to reign at twelve years, he did evil in his youth, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 1.

A child therefore is rather meant childish, 1. In understanding, 1 Cor. xiv. 20; 2. In affection and disposition; first, Cleaving to young counsellors, 1 Kings xii. 8; secondly, Soon wavering in religion, Eph. iv. 14; thirdly, Led by sense and sensible objects, more than by depth of judgment and reason; led by passions and lusts of youth, pastimes and recreations, but careless of matters of importance. Thus Rehoboam is said to be young and tender in heart, when he was above forty-one years old, 1 Kings xiv. 21, with 2 Chron. xiii. 7. And so indeed Solomon expresseth this childishness in slothfulness and remissness of government, ver. 18, as by eating in the morning he expresseth luxurious feasting, ver. 19.

Whose princes eat in the morning, which implieth both the unseasonableness of their eating, especially their feasting then, as ver. 19, expoundeth it of the morning, being the principal time of judgment, Jer. xxi. 12. And the excess and riot of their eating, to wit, for gluttony and drunkenness, rather than for strength, as appeareth by the opposition of good princes' diet, ver. 17.

*Reason* 1. From the danger of childish government to a state, as also of riotous government. Which dangers be, 1. Remissness of government, or slothfulness, whence the decay of all good in a commonwealth, as in a house that is neglected; as decay of justice, trading, military power, and skill,

honour and reputation with foreign princes and states; and, which is worst of all, decay in religion, and purity thereof; whence also dropping in of contentious corruptions into all sorts. 2. Prodigal expense of the treasure of the state in feasting and banqueting, in masks and revels, where money must answer all; and that not a purseful, or pocketful, or bagful, or chestful, but a whole king's treasury; and when that faileth, then illegal exactions of the subjects' estates.

The son of nobles; not so much of noble ancestors, for most kings are such, and yet their kingdoms not always blessed; yea, sometimes they that are raised from low estates, as David from following the sheep, may be blessed princes, and the land blessed in them. But a son of nobles is a noble son, a man of noble spirit, or heroes, for from the Hebrew word *heroe* it seems to be derived, are so called of whiteness, not so much for wearing white garments, as being bright and glorious, *Viri illustres, et clarissimi*, opposed to dark or obscure men, Prov. xxii. 29.

A man of a noble spirit, first, *Notabilis*, well known and approved for his virtues, Dent. i. 13. Secondly, Of a public spirit; regardeth public good ends more than private self ends, Ps. cxxxvii. 6. Thirdly, Affecteth rather to be loved than feared, and yet to be feared too with due reverence; servile natures are imperious and cruel—*aut servit humiliter, aut superbe dominatur*; noble spirits, as of lions, will *pareere subjectis*, be moderate in punishments, merciful to suppliants. Fourthly, Regardeth honour above life, much more before money, preferring the fifth commandment above the sixth, much more above the eighth.

Eat in due season: 1. For time, not in the morning; 2. For measure, not for excess in gluttony and drunkenness, but sparingly.

But for strength, 1. Of body and mind; 2. Of fitness to the duties of their place.

*Reason* of the blessedness of the state by such: 1. Vigilancy, and diligent attention of such to state affairs; not suffering decays in the good of the state, nor droppings in of the mischievous ruinous evils; secondly, Provident frugality in preserving the treasure of the state, 2 Chron. ix. 27; 1 Kings x. 21.

*Use 1.* To teach us what to pray for in behalf of our native country: 1. What evils to be avoided; 2. What blessings to be desired.

*Use 2.* To teach us what manner of magistrates are to be chosen in our little commonwealth, and how they are to walk. It is fellowship with Christ, and living by faith in him, that girdeth us up to our callings; sitting loose from the head breedeth a paralytic distemper in the body.

*Use 3.* To teach all men a right use of meats and drinks; large breakfasts break the necks of our strength and of our callings. The end of feasts should be for strength, and so moderate as our money may answer.

*Use 4.* To teach householders to beware of slothfulness and ill husbandry; it will ruin our houses, for from thence is the comparison here fetched;

*Use 5.* To teach us a wise use of money; to be responsible to all our expenses.

Ver. 20. *Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.*

Solomon having declared many vanities, like dead flies, found in princes and statesmen, he now directeth wise subjects to some such Christian duties as are fit to be practised at all times, but most needful and seasonable to be attended to in evil and dangerous times, in this and the whole context of the next chapter. As, first, To beware of cursing princes and statesmen, however corrupt their government be, ver. 20; secondly, To bestow our talents liberally, whilst time serveth, before evil come upon the earth, chap. xi. 1, 2, &c.; thirdly, To be diligent in our callings early and late, ver. 4-6.

Parts, two: first, A commandment forbidding to curse the king, or rich and great men, his princes and officers. And this prohibition amplified by the strictness of it, forbidding the cursing of them where it might be supposed to be done with greatest secrecy and safety: not the king in thy thought, the rich in thy bed-chamber. Secondly, A reason, from the danger of discovery of it by speedy and unlikely means; for the birds of the air (the master of wings) will declare the word or matter.

*Doct.* Though the king should be childish, and princes intemperate and slothful, and both of them

suffer the state to fall to decay, yet it is neither lawful nor safe for private men to revile or curse either of them, no, not in the greatest, Exod. xxii. 28, where the prohibition is general, without restraint to good magistrates.

For opening of the point to be shewn: first, How far a private subject may go in such a case; secondly, How far he may not go. A private subject may, first, Conceive of a king as he seeth him plainly to be, and so of other statesmen; and accordingly, as his calling requireth it, he may reprove them all to their faces, 2 Sam. xii. 9; 1 Sam. xiii. 13, 14; 1 Kings xviii. 18, and xxi. 20; 2 Chron. xix. 2; Ezek. xxi. 25. This is not to vilify or curse them, but to restore and heal them, or at least to leave them without excuse. Secondly, He may complain of their wickedness to God, and confess it, Dan. ix. 8. Thirdly, He may speak of it to subjects so far as to prevent the corrupting of them by the authority or example of their governors, 2 Kings vi. 32; Hosea v. 11, and vii. 3, 5. Public persons and the whole people may resist them in evil, 2 Chron. xxvi. 17, 18; 1 Sam. xiv. 44, 45; but none may, first, Despise their callings or governments, which are of God, Jude 8; secondly, They may not revile them nor make them worse than they be; תקלל is to make light, as metals by clipping and washing; 2 Sam. xvi. 7, 8, David was no son of Belial, nor bloody to the house of Saul, though so to Uriah; thirdly, Imprecate or wish evil to them, Mat. v. 44, à fortiori.

*Obj.* Did not Paul revile Ananias? Acts xxiii. 3.

*Ans.* He knew him to be a judge, ver. 2—sittest thou to judgment? &c.—though he knew him not to be the high priest. But he did not revile him, but reproved him gravely for his hypocrisy—oh whited wall!—and iniquity, commanding him to be smitten against law, and prophesied his destruction. Nor doth he say he would not have said so much to him if he had known him to be the high priest, (for Jeremiah did say so much to Pashur, Jer. xx. 1-6,) though the high priesthood was then accomplished in Christ; yet, while the temple stood, the shadows were to be buried with honour, but this was no dishonour to his place, to reprove him justly.

*Reason 1.* They are by their place fathers of the country, Isa. xlix. 23, and fathers, though wicked,

are not to be despised nor cursed, Exod. xxi. 17 ; Prov. xxx. 17.

*Reason 2.* They bear the name and place and image of God's sovereignty and authority, Exod. xxii. 28 ; Ps. lxxxii. 6.

*Reason 3.* They are heads of the whole body of the state, 1 Sam. xv. 17, and so in cursing them we curse ourselves and the whole state.

*Reason 4.* From the danger which will redound to ourselves by discovery of our words. Princes have long ears and quick-sighted eyes. Birds of the air are put hyperbolically for unlikely means, not so fitly expounded angels ; for we do not read of their ministry in that kind, though a spirit of prophecy hath done as much, 2 Kings vi. 11, 12 ; nor devils, though they be called fowls of the air, Mat. xiii. 4, 19. But if they had a commission so to do, it would disturb all states. But the saying is verified, first, Sometimes in birds occasionally discovering secrets, as the swallows revealed Besrus's murder of his father ; who, as he sat by the fire with his neighbours, the swallows chirping and singing above in the chimney, he proked them down and killed them ; and when they that sat by him found fault with him for it, as an unnatural cruelty, he excused himself, that the burden of their song was a burden to him, which was, Besrus hath slain his father ; whence he being apprehended and brought before the magistrates, confessed the murder and was executed. So *Ibici Grues* discovered the murder of the poet Ibicus ; whence the proverb *Ibici Grues*. Secondly, Sometimes in words flying like winged fowls, flying in the mouths of idle talkers or indiscreet speakers, of spies or promoters, and of faithful subjects, Esther ii. 21 23.

*Use 1.* To observe the divine authority of God's word, and the spiritual sovereignty thereof, putting a law upon our very thoughts, which no law of man can do, 2 Cor. x. 4.

*Use 2.* To teach magistrates to be the more careful of preserving God's honour, since he is careful of preserving theirs, even in the secret closets of their subjects. What a fearful ingratitude were it in a prince to curse and swear and blaspheme the name of God, who would have them not cursed, no, not in secret.

*Use 3.* To teach us to observe God's care of our

safety, who doth prevent us with such wary cautions, lest we fall into danger unexpectedly. We therefore ought to be the more regardful of the safety of his honour, and of his ordinances.

*Use 4.* To take up this lesson and counsel of Solomon, not to meddle out of our callings in state matters to the provocation of princes ; yea, to bridle our tongues, though princes be not such public blessings as were to be wished. How much more ought we to be far off from reviling or vilifying good magistrates ? God took it ill at Miriam's hand and Aaron's, Num. xii. 1, 2, 8, 9, and worse at the hands of Korah and his company, Num. xvi. 3-33.

## CHAPTER XI.

*Ver. 1.* *Cast thy bread upon the waters : for thou shalt find it after many days.*

*Ver. 2.* *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight ; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.*

*Ver. 3.* *If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth ; and if the tree fall towards the south, or towards the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.*

Coherence, see above in chap. x. 20. Solomon having shewed sundry several vanities, which, like dead flies, are found in statesmen, he proceedeth to direct his wise subjects to some such Christian duties as are requisite at all times, but especially in such dangerous times as the vanity of great men are wont to bring upon a state, from chap. x. 20, to the end of the eighth discourse, of the vanity of the estate of the creatures, till we come to conclude the whole book ; as, first, To beware of cursing princes and statesmen, how corrupt soever their government be, the better to provide for our own safety, chap. x. 20. Secondly, To be the more liberal to pious and charitable uses, in regard of the troubles coming upon the land, where such misgovernment is found, chap. xi. 1-3. Thirdly, To be the more diligent and fruitful in the duties of our calling, ver. 4-6. Fourthly, To break off a course of sin, and to hasten repentance and turning unto God, howsoever the times be, chap. xii. 7, 8 ; whereupon Solomon concludeth the whole book, chap. xii. 9-14. The text is an exhortation to liberality or beneficence—cast

thy bread, give a portion, &c., which is amplified by a twofold state of the subject: first, By the fleeting estate of the subject, like waters, ver. 2; secondly, By the variety of subjects, persons, or multitude of them, ver. 7, 8; and confirmed by four motives: first, From the recompense thereof at last—in fulness of days thou shalt find it, ver. 1. Secondly, From the uncertainty of future calamities threatening the state—for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the country, ver. 2. Thirdly, From the example of the clouds, which, when they are full, empty themselves upon the earth, ver. 3. Fourthly, From the certainty of the rest or abode of a benefit where it is bestowed, set forth by the similitude of a tree lying where it falleth, ver. 3.

*Doct.* 1. When dangerous times hang over the public state, it is a point of holy wisdom to be liberal and bountiful to charitable and pious uses, especially there, where there is least hope of recompense in man's eye. Bread cast upon the face of the waters is utterly lost in man's reason; it will either sink or swim away. Yet cast thy bread there, especially in dangerous times, when thou knowest not what evils are coming upon the land. There be six or seven properties of alms-deeds, or other good offices of Christian love and bounty, which Solomon comprehendeth, even all of them, in these words: first, To be doing good readily and roundly, not so as if a gift or good work stuck in a man's fingers, implied in the word *cast*; not give only, or draw out, but cast. God loveth a cheerful giver, 2 Cor. ix. 7. Secondly, To do it usefully and helpfully; cast thy bread, not stones, nor scorpions, nor scraps, nor refuse, but such things as may do true good, may be a staff and support to others, as bread. Bread (in Mat. v. 11) is put for all profitable outward things. Thirdly, To do it justly, of a man's own, not others'; not to rob one to succour another: give *thy* bread, Prov. v. 16, 17; Isa. lxi. 8. Pay debts first, give after. Fourthly, To do it freely, without hope of recompense from them on whom you cast your bread. Bread cast on water will either sink or swim away, Luke xiv. 13, 14. By waters is not here meant *locus irriguus*, moist and fruitful ground, as Isa. xxxii. 20; for there it is not said, Besides all waters—where such places are fruitful—but, Upon the face of the waters. Nor is here meant watery faces, weeping

for want, though that be part of the meaning. Fifthly, To do it sincerely, without aim of vain-glory. This bread thus cast upon the face of the waters stayeth not to be seen of men, but either sinketh or swimmeth away. Bread given, as the pharisees did, for vainglory, is cast rather upon pillars of marble or of brass rather than upon fleeting waters. Sixthly, To do it frequently and often, not rarely and to a few: 'Give a portion to seven, and also to eight,' ver. 2. Seven put for many, 1 Sam. ii. 5; Micah v. 5. A good man disperseth his beneficence—to wit, to many, Ps. cxii. 9. The larger the field is wherein seed is scattered, the more hope of a plentiful harvest. Seventhly, To do it wisely and discreetly. 'Give a portion to seven, and also to eight,' implieth, 1. Not all to others, leaving none for home, but give a part; 2. Not all to some, none to others, but a part to seven, and also to eight; 3. Not a pittance, but a portion—such a proportion as whereon a poor man may work and occupy, to do some good withal, as with a portion.

*Reason* 1. From the recompense; for in multitude of days thou shalt find it, text—which implieth, First, Length of days, promised to men fruitful this way, which often holdeth in proper speech, Ps. xxxiv. 12, 14. Do good, and it is a way to see good days long, Dan. iv. 27. Liberal men seldom die young. Abraham lived long, Gen. xxv. 7, 8; Ps. xli. 2. Secondly, If they should die sooner, their children will find it, Ps. xxxvii. 25, 26. Thirdly, Sometimes themselves find speedy recompense in the same kind, 1 Kings xvii. 13–16. Fourthly, Sometimes they find it with usury, or advantage in spiritual and eternal grace and glory, Luke xvi. 10, &c.; Gal. vi. 6–9; 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19; 2 Tim. i. 16, &c.

*Reason* 2. From the uncertainty of future calamities, or rather certainty of their coming, but uncertainty in what kind, text, ver. 2. And therefore, first, It is good to be giving whilst we have it, lest all be swept away in a deluge of public calamity; secondly, It is wisdom by this means to prolong tranquillity, Dan. iv. 27; thirdly, It is seasonable to prepare against a storm, Ps. xli. 1, 3.

*Reason* 3. From the example of the clouds, which, being full of water, pour down rain, text, ver. 3, and that both upon earth and sea. Not like rich men who, the more rich they grow, grow the more nig-

garded, and give more sparingly than the poorer sort. Yea, the clouds, by pouring out rain regain it again both from the sea and earth, by ascending vapours; and so do liberal men gain by bounty, Prov. xi. 25.

*Reason 4.* From the uncertainty of the rest of a benefit where it is bestowed, as a tree resteth where it falleth, text, ver. 3. Benefit will be reaped from thence to thee, though they should not be the better for it, Isa. xlix. 4, 5; Ps. xxxv. 13; how much more when they do reap benefit by our beneficence, Job xxix. 13, and xxxi. 20.

*Use 1.* To exhort to unwearied and abundant fruitfulness in all these kinds, by all these reasons, as so many motives, Prov. xix. 17; Luke vi. 38.

Ver. 4. *He that observeth the wind, shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds, shall not reap.*

Ver. 5. *As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.*

Ver. 6. *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*

Solomon, in regard of the dangers of the times, when kings are childish and princes humorous, exhorted to liberality in ver. 1-3, which was the second duty he inferred upon that occasion. In these words he presseth still the same, but with an enlargement unto all faithfulness and diligence in any duty of a man's calling, especially in such dangerous times; which is a third improvement of such evil times. To set forward this duty, he removeth a doubt which might hinder a man from beneficence and fruitfulness in his course and calling. The doubt is taken either from the fear of some danger or dangers that might befall a man in so doing, which he expresseth under a proverbial comparison, taken from husbandmen, who, for fear of foul weather, do sometimes neglect some duty of husbandry, in seed-time or harvest, ver. 4. Or else from some difficulty which sometimes accompany Christian and holy and great undertakings of duty, especially such duties as may help forward reformation in such times.

To the former he answereth, ver. 4, that such

fears of damage and danger are more dangerous than the hurt we fear; for they will prevent the performance of all good duties, and the recompense of that performance; as a husbandman that observeth the wind shall never sow, and he that observeth the clouds shall never reap, ver. 4.

To the latter he answereth by opposing the strange and secret assistance and success and deliverance which God giveth unto men in the duties of their calling. Which he amplifieth by a comparison from the like secret assistance and deliverance which God giveth to the child fashioned in the womb, both in the framing of his spirit, or soul, and in the setting and ordering of his bones; which is a strange, yet ordinary secret in nature, like unto which all the works which a man undertaketh in his calling are fashioned and wrought of God, who worketh all, ver. 5. And thus it cometh to pass when God is pleased to put to his helping hand to us in the works of our calling, otherwise nothing prospereth in our hand.

From both which Solomon inferreth an exhortation to diligence and fruitfulness in our calling, directly contrary to the former doubts and difficulties. The objector propounded doubts and difficulties, and thereupon neglected to sow. But Solomon inferreth a contrary conclusion; therefore to sow more abundantly and diligently. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening let not thy hand rest, or cease. Reason whereof he giveth from the uncertainty of the event or issue, reserved of God to this or that duty or work: 'For thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this or that; or whether both shall be alike good,' ver. 6.

*Doct.* He that shall be discouraged from beneficence in his course, and from faithfulness in his calling, by doubts and fears of uncertain dangers and damages, shall never do good in this world, nor receive good in the world that is to come.

He that observeth the wind, that is, so observeth it as to forbear sowing,

Shall never sow, that is, never do good in this life, which is a time of sowing.

He that observeth the clouds, which are as uncertain signs of bad weather as the wind,

He shall never reap, to wit, any recompense of his work in the other world, which is the harvest-

time chiefly, Mat. xiii. 39, though there is also a harvest-time of reaping, even in this world, Prov. xi. 31. As if a man shall be loath to cast his bread upon the waters for fear of sickness, old age, store of children growing on, the unsettledness of the times, &c. Such a one shall both lose his seed, his good work, and his harvest of reward from God. As the husbandman, that keepeth his corn in his garner or barn, for fear of sowing in doubtful weather, shall both lose his crop, and, in time, vermin and other casualty will consume his grain in his barn.

*Reason 1.* From the uncertainty of the events of all endeavours in an ordinary course, text, ver. 6; Acts xx. 22; God so providing that the godly should live by faith, and the wicked should either, first, Grow unprofitable in their talents, because God is a hard master, Mat. xxv. 24; secondly, Grow hardened, either in pride, if they prosper, Amos vi. 13; Hab. i. 16; or in discontent, if they be crossed, Isa. viii. 21.

*Reason 2.* From the sorrow and afflictions that God hath annexed to all the labours of our calling, Gen. iii. 19.

*Reason 3.* From Satan's readiness and watchfulness to stir up and aggravate dangers and discouragements to any goodness, Rev. xii. 4.

*Reason 4.* From the trials which God puts upon us, by causing many dangers and evils to hover over us, though not to bring them upon us, but to try our obedience. So the people in the wilderness feared thirst and famine and the Anakims, but it was only to try their obedience; for God was ever ready with supply, Deut. viii. 2.

*Reason 5.* From our own faithless and sluggish hearts, which are ready to imagine fears of evil where none be, Prov. xxvi. 13. Lions are as much afraid of streets, as men of deserts.

*Use 1.* To teach us wisely to consider what good duties God requireth of us in our Christian course and calling, and set upon it without fear or forlorn discouragement. Every man in his place, the magistrate, Neh. vi. 9, 11; the minister, Acts xx. 22-24; Luke xiii. 31, 32; yea, the wife, 1 Pet. iii. 6; yea, children and servants, fear not turning to God for fear of carnal parents, master, fellows, &c.

*Quest.* But may not a man for fear of danger hold off his hand from some duty in some cases?

*Ans.* Yes, in case two things concur: first, The dangers be certain, not as winds and clouds, which may as well blow over as bring foul weather; secondly, The dangers be of greater damage than the duty can be of use to myself and others. Thus David spared Joab, 2 Sam. iii. 39; and the Jews forbore the building of the temple, Ezra iv. 23, 24. Otherwise fear not their fears, 1 Pet. iii. 14; Prov. xxix. 25; Luke xii. 4, 5.

*Use 2.* To look at all good duties, as sowing of seed, Gal. vi. 7, 8. As therefore a man would make choice of precious seed, so do every work in the best manner; let sacrifices be of the fattest, Gen. iv. 3, 4.

*Use 3.* To expect a harvest, a reaping-time according to our seed, Gal. vi. 7-10.

Ver. 5. *As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all, &c.*

In these words Solomon exhorteth to fruitfulness in good duties, the duties of our calling, especially those that are most behoveful in ill times, by removing the impediments, which are three: first, From the hazard and danger, yet uncertain danger, that may befall ourselves, of which was spoken in ver. 4. Secondly, From the difficulty which may be in sundry duties needful to be performed in ill times, especially in case a man's calling require him to seek reformation of public evils, ver. 5; which he removeth by the unknown help and success that God will cast in and afford such hard attempts, which exceed the skill and strength of man. This he setteth forth by the like help of God, ordinarily put forth, in producing two great works, both of them far exceeding the strength and skill of man: first, As thou knowest not the way of the spirit, to wit, of its conveyance into the child bred in the womb, and its work there; secondly, As thou knowest not the way of the bones in the womb of her that is with child; so thou knowest not the work of God which worketh all, ver. 5. Thirdly, From the uncertainty of prosperous or good success; from whence Solomon gathereth rather a motive to

continual fruitfulness in good duties upon all opportunities: ver. 6, 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper,' &c. The expression is an allegory taken from husbandry; sow in all seasons, morning, evening, in winter, in the spring, for thou knowest not whether seed-time shall prosper, &c.

*Doct. 1.* As is the way of the spirit, and of the bones of the woman with child, so is the way of God in working our works for us, secret and hidden from us; yet, when he pleaseth, carries them on effectually. The way of the spirit is the way of entrance of it into the infant conceived in the womb. To beget a soul is beyond the skill or strength of the parents, yea, or to frame the body in the womb; yea, we know not how God worketh it: whether, first, By creation of nothing. If so, whether God maketh it pure; then how cometh it to be defiled? the body being without sin, as a carcase after death, cannot defile the soul with sin. If impure; then how is not God the author of sin. Secondly, By propagation; if so, then it is made either of the whole soul of the parents, and then the parents would die; or of part of the soul, and then the soul were partable or dividable, and the soul of the parents would be maimed; or of the seed of the soul, but it hath no excrement, as having no superfluity of nourishment. Thirdly, By transfusion, as one candle transfuseth the like candle-light into prepared matter; if so, then why do not acts of generation often speed in couples most suitable? and why are the souls of children so often unlike to parents?

Fourthly, By efformation, as the potter formeth a vessel out of clay, which, of all the rest, is most probable—to wit, that God formeth the soul, though not of nothing, which is properly creation, but of pre-existent matter, whether of the spirituous part of the seed, which is easy for God to do, or of the souls of the parents, as of Adam's rib he made his wife's body, which no man can do, but only God, it being more than God hath given to nature to produce such a work. Hence God is said to be a former of souls, Zech. xii. 1, as a potter of a vessel of clay.

Or the way of the spirit, may be meant the manner of its fashioning the organs of the body, in case

it be thought instrumental to God, it being, as they say it is, *Sui domicilii architectrix*. How cometh the soul to work so skilful and curious a fabric which it knoweth not, nor can shape the like when it is grown up to ripest understanding, skill, and experience? Only it is the work of the Lord, who, when he pleaseth to concur, the work is carried on effectually.

Also the way of the spirit; it is a hidden secret to us, if spirit be extended farther to signify breath, as often it doth, how the child in the womb can take its breath twenty weeks in the womb. If it breathe not, how doth the child live? If it do breathe, how cometh it to pass it is not stifled in the womb?

The way of the bones of her that is with child, for so the way may be repeated from the former part of the sentence, how they come to be opened to give passage to the infant, or how closed and shut again, and both without breaking; and how in some soon and easily, in others late and hardly, Job x. 10–12; Ps. cxxxix. 13–16. So is it in all the great works of God, which we do transact or pass through, as in our regeneration, John iii. 8, and i. 13; in our victories over many and great corruptions and temptations; so in men's public vocations. It seemed an incredible work to Moses to deliver Israel from Pharaoh; so to Esther to work deliverance for her people; so to Samuel to anoint a king against Saul, 1 Sam. xvi. 2; so to Nehemiah to repair Jerusalem, yet, according to the good hand of God, it was done, Neh. ii. 8; so to Zerubbabel to build a temple, which required Solomon's treasure, Hag. ii. 1–3, &c.

*Use 1.* To teach women with child not to faint under the danger or difficulty of their travail, but to look up to God who worketh all. God, as he hath given a soul to the child, you know not what way; and as he hath fashioned the bones of the child, you know not how; so he it is that worketh safe and comfortable deliverance, Isa. lxvi. 9.

*Use 2.* To encourage men to undertake the works of their calling, though never so difficult and dangerous; go on, be doing. Little doth any man know by what weak means God bringeth mighty things to pass. Wherefore hath God so mightily stretched forth his powerful arm in our first coming into the world, but to give us a pledge from our tender years



of his power and readiness to assist us in all the works he hath to do by us? Isa. xlvi. 3, 4.

*Use 3.* To stir us up to give up ourselves to the Lord, in the new birth especially, which, though it be a great work and difficult, yea, impossible to flesh and blood, yet we little know, when God is pleased to set in, how much may be wrought beyond what we can ask or think.

*Ver. 6.* *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*

Coherence, see in ver. 5, 6.

*Doct. 1.* The works or labours of a man in his course and calling, they are his seed. The metaphor is borrowed from husbandry, who sow their seed in all seasons, morning, evening, winter, spring, Hosea x. 12; Prov. xi. 18; Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6; Job iv. 8.

*Use 1.* From the proportion our works have to fruits; whence they are often called fruits, Phil. i. 11; Col. i. 6; Mat. xxi. 34; Rom. i. 13. Now it is a usual thing in nature that the seed of all fruitful trees lieth in their fruits, Gen. i. 12.

*Reason 2.* From the smallness of it in itself, Mat. xiii. 31, yet yielding great growth and increase, Gal. vi. 6, 7; Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6. It was a small seed that word, 2 Kings v. 8, yet brought forth great increase.

*Reason 3.* From the lying of it for a time, as it were, under the clods and furrows of the earth, in obscurity, seeming rather to fall into loss than to promise increase, Ps. cxxvi. 5.

*Use 1.* To provoke to sow precious seed, let our ways be fruitful, and fruitful in the best works. No fruit but hath his seed in it, and the better the seed, the richer the harvest; every man in his calling let him do his works of the best.

*Use 2.* To encourage every man to wait for a greater increase of his labour than it is worth. The seed is little worth compared to the harvest, 1 Kings xix. 19, 20.

*Doct. 2.* Our ignorance and uncertainty of success of our labours in our callings should not dishearten us, but rather encourage us to a greater diligence and fruitfulness in them, Acts xx. 22.

*Reason 1.* From the strict account we must give

of our time and talents unto God, Eph. v. 15; Mat. xxv. 26, 27.

*Reason 2.* From the abundant recompense of reward to fruitfulness in good duties, 1 Cor. xv. 58.

*Reason 3.* From the greater hopes of a more plentiful harvest when more variety of seed is sown. If one miscarry, the other may take; yea, and none will be lost. The merchant that tradeth in many barks is more like to see a safe return of some.

*Reason 4.* From the greater exercise of faith, hope, and patience where events are uncertain, 2 Cor. v. 7; 1 Cor. ix. 10; James v. 7.

*Use 1.* To exhort to fruitfulness in our course and calling upon all occasions and opportunities: 'In the morning sow thy seed, in the evening let not thy hand rest.' Seed in the garner multiplieth not, yea, rather decreaseth and corrupteth. Minister in his calling, 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2; magistrate in his, Ps. ci. 8; every man in his, Prov. x. 4, 5.

*Use 2.* To persuade us to contentment in ignorance and uncertainty of events; and learn we rather the more dependence on the Lord for his blessing, and be more thankful for any good success at any time.

*Use 3.* To be more fruitful in that which is good, for our ignorance sake of the events of our labour, text.

*Ver. 7.* *Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun:*

*Ver. 8.* *But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.*

Coherence, see ver. 1-3. These words express and declare the fourth wholesome instruction which Solomon giveth to men that live in the ruinous times of a civil state; wherein he teacheth all men this holy duty, that however the times here may fall out to their own particular, yet to remember the dark times that remain after this life is ended, and therefore so to provide and prepare in this life, as that we may with comfort leave it; which duty Solomon requireth may not be neglected, notwithstanding three diverse things which might occasion the neglect of it: first, The sweetness of life for the present, ver. 7; secondly, The long continuance of life to some men; thirdly, The prosperity and comfort-

able estate that may befall some men in their long life. Yet to remember, first, The days of darkness (which are coming after this life is ended) are many; secondly, That all the future time and work will be but vanity, ver. 8.

The light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun. Light is a periphrasis of this natural life, Job iii. 20; so here, as who should say, life is sweet; and so they that behold the sun are put for men living in this world, Eccles. vii. 11. And here both are put in opposition to the days of darkness after this life is ended, which are days of death and burial.

*Doct.* Though life be sweet, and to some men long, yea, and comfortable all their days, yet let them remember that the days which are coming are many, both of darkness and vanity. The sweetness of life is argued by even Peter's loathness to die, even when an aged Christian, and the cause of death was honourable and grateful, John xxi. 18. Days of death and burial are days of darkness, Job x. 21, 22; and in hell the darkness is extreme and everlasting; the darkness is outward or extreme, Mat. xxii. 13; notwithstanding the fire, Mat. xxv. 41; as a fire of brimstone, Isa. xxx. 33.

*Reason* of life's sweetness: first, From many desirable comforts that we enjoy in this life, congruous and suitable to all our senses, and to all our affections; secondly, From the intimate union of soul and body, so as they both make but one person; hence loathness to part. We will lose any member to save head and heart, or any vital part.

Some men spend their days in prosperity, Job xxi. 13.

*Reason* 1. From the reward of godliness, Prov. iii. 16.

*Reason* 2. From the patience and bounty of God to evil men, Gen. xxv. 17.

*Reasons* why the days of darkness and vanity are many: first, From their continuance to the resurrection, in the end of the world, John xiv. 12.

Secondly, From the ignorance and oblivion of all things in the grave, Ps. lxxxviii. 12, and vi. 5.

Thirdly, From the disappointment of any labour all that time, Eccles. ix. 10; Ps. xxx. 9.

This to be remembered. Words of sense in the Hebrew are understood with affection and action;

so this word, Eccles. xii. 1, which implieth here, 1. Continual mindful knowledge of it; 2. So to be affected with care and conscience of it, as that it may take deeper impression in us than all the transient cares and comforts of this natural life, whereof, though the days be many, yet not so many; 3. So to provide in this life as that when our bodies shall sleep in darkness, yet our souls may enjoy the light and comfort of everlasting life and blessedness.

*Reason* 1. From the benefit of such remembrance. In so doing we remember God, Eccles. xii. 1, and ourselves also, Luke xvi. 4.

*Reason* 2. From the danger and folly, brutish folly, of such forgetfulness, Job xxi. 13; Eccles. iii. 21.

*Use* of life's sweetness: 1. For thankfulness to God, who hath given us life, and all the lively comforts of it, Job x. 12. 2. For thankfulness to Christ, who laid down his life for our sakes, Mat. xx. 28, whence we are to live to him, 2 Cor. v. 15.

*Use* 2. To learn to behold a greater sweetness in the life of grace, in union with Christ, in the light of God's countenance, Ps. iv. 6, 7, and lxiii. 3.

*Use* 1. Of many days of darkness and vanity, and remembrance hereof: 1. To warn us not to be so taken up with the sweetness of this life, as to forget the far longer time to come.

*Use* 2. To teach us not to envy the many prosperous days of wicked men here; their lightsome days here are but a few to their dark days behind.

*Use* 3. To provide here for life in death, and for light in darkness, and for felicity against vanity. Means hereof: first, Meditation frequent, and constant, and serious, of the shortness of this life, and of all the comforts of it, Isa. xl. 6-8; secondly, Not to rest in a state of darkness here, Eph. v. 8; 1 John i. 6; thirdly, Behold Christ losing his sweet life for us, and mourn over him, Zech. xii. 10; fourthly, Walk in his light, 1 John i. 7.

Ver. 9. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

Ver. 10. *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.*

For a fifth wholesome counsel and instruction, Solomon giveth it unto young men, which is twofold: first, To know God will bring them to judgment, ver. 9, 10; secondly, To remember their Creator in the days of their youth, ver. 1-7. And both this and the former counsels are but further motives and directions to take the counsel given, ver. 6, 4, sowing our seed in the morning, and in the evening not to cease.

*Reason 1.* For after this life is ended, many will be the days of darkness, and they will be days of vanity, ver. 7, 8.

*Reason 2.* For youth is the morning of our age, and so a fit time to sow good seed, and usually mis-employed to the sowing of vanity, ver. 9, 10. And there be three words that express it: שְׁהַרַּת doth properly signify the morning of age, ver. 10. בְּהוֹרַת, youth, is, as the word signifieth, the choice age of a man's life, as that, 1. Which is chosen to most employments of action; 2. Wherein a man is to choose what course to take; 3. And which a man would choose to live in always. יְלֻדוֹת is childhood, which is the green flourishing blood of age or life.

Parts, first, An ironical concession to children and youth to rejoice in their days and ways: 'Rejoice, O young man,' &c. Secondly, A serious admonition to know the judgment of God reserved for them: 'But know that,' &c., ver. 9. Thirdly, Hence an exhortation to put away and remove the passions and lusts of youth and childhood, ver. 10; therefore remove the irascible passions of the heart and evil from thy flesh, that is, the lusts of the flesh. Fourthly, A reason of that exhortation, from the vanity of childhood and youth, ver. 10.

*Doct. 1.* God is wont in a holy scorn to give up children and youth in their own days, to take their own ways and to rejoice, or applaud themselves, in them. See the like kind of irony or holy scorn, 1 Kings xviii. 27, and xxii. 15; 2 Chron. xxv. 8.

*Quest.* But doth not God speak seriously, as allowing children and youth more liberties than are meet for riper years? as chap. ix. 7-9.

*Ans.* There be some lawful liberties which God doth allow to that age, as Zech. viii. 5, and ix. 17. But if he had spoken of these, he would have given some just ground of encouragement, (for it is your

portion, or the like;) but here he rather giveth a check and admonition against it, from a ground that is wont to damp, not lawful, but carnal delights: 'But know that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.' The ways of, 1. Childhood: first, Ignorance, 1 Cor. xiv. 20; secondly, Vanity, serious in trifles, and trifling in serious things, text, ver. 10; thirdly, Folly; fourthly, Falsehood, Ps. lviii. 3; fifthly, Forwardness, Mat. xi. 16, 17. 2. Youth: first, High conceits of their own sufficiency and worth, 1 Tim. iii. 6; secondly, Inordinate and excessive love of liberty; thirdly, Wantonness; fourthly, Strong affections upon weak grounds; fifthly, Impatience of counsels and reproofs, which is stubbornness, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19; sixthly, Prodigality, Luke xv. 12, 13; seventhly, Impudency, Isa. iii. 5. God giveth up children and youth to these ways, first, By not giving them his grace, either in restraining or converting so soon. Secondly, By taking from them such parents, governors, and friends as might restrain them, 2 Chron. xxiv. 17; as he that taketh away a dam, giveth a running river leave to run strongly. Thirdly, By giving them up to a company of flatterers and parasites, sons of Belial, who encourage them to evil, 2 Chron. xxiv. 17, 18, and harden them against wise and grave counsel, 1 Kings xii. 10, 11. Fourthly, By suiting the heart with fit and strong objects, and leaving the heart to the impetuosity of its own passions and lusts.

*Reason 1.* From the idol of self-fulness which God seeth in the heart of youth, according to which he answereth them and all others, Ezek. xiv. 4.

*Reason 2.* From their wilful disobedience, Ps. lxxxix. 11.

*Reason 3.* From his delight to scorn scorners, Prov. iii. 34; Ps. ii. 3, 4.

*Reason 4.* From his purpose to magnify his grace the more, and to humble them the more in their conversion, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.

*Use 1.* To humble childhood and youth the more, the flower of whose age is so much corrupted. If our choice days be so wicked, what are our dregs? If our first-fruits be so unclean, what is our whole lump? yea, and this spiritual judgment should humble youth the more, for it is a more dreadful judgment for God to scorn, than to frown and threaten.

*Doct. 2.* God would have children and youth to know that God will bring them to judgment for all their childish and youthful courses, and for their delight in them, Ps. l. 18-22; Rev. xx. 12; 2 Cor. v. 10; Eccles. xii. 14.

*Reason 1.* From God's impartial justice to all, Rom. ii. 6-11. God taketh no pleasure in proper youth, Ps. cxlvii. 10, nor pity on carnal children.

*Reason 2.* From the proportion which God keepeth in recompensing like measure, yea, double measure of torment to deliciousness, Rev. xviii. 7.

*Use 1.* To charge children and youth to put away and remove from them their passions and lusts, the evils of their flesh, ver. 10. Youth eagerly pursue their lusts, and boisterously contend for them, but lusts overwhelmed with the greater torments, *et potentes potenter torquebuntur.*

*Use 2.* To discover and convince the vanity of childhood and youth, ver. 10. In regard, first, Of the many corruptions incident to their age, mentioned above; secondly, Of their fond rejoicing in them, as a fool in his fetters and shackles; thirdly, Of the danger growing thereby, of impenitency here, and of judgment hereafter.

*Use 3.* To exhort both to remember their Creator in their prime days, Eccles. xii. 1.

## CHAPTER XII.

*Ver. 1.* Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

Solomon, to restrain children and youth from the vanities of their age, propounded to them a double antidote: first, The knowledge of God's approaching judgment, whereto he will bring them for all the evils of their youth, chap. xi. 9, whence he inferred two corollaries: 1. An exhortation to put away youthful passions and lusts; 2. The vanity of childhood and youth, chap. xi. 10. Secondly, The remembrance of their Creators in the days of their youth, chap. xii. 1. The copulative, *and*, implieth a connexion upon the former, as the addition of another remedy like the former.

*Doct. 1.* The remembrance of our Creator in the days of our youth is a sovereign remedy against the

vanities both of youth and age. It is a remedy against the vanities of youth before spoken of; and the words following, 'before the evil days come,' &c., argue it is a remedy against the wearisome vanities of old age. Remember words of sense, in the Hebrew tongue, are to be understood with affection and action, by reason of the combination and concatenation of all the faculties of the soul in pure nature; like as of links in a chain—draw one and draw all, break one and break all, Luke xxiii. 42; 1 Sam. i. 19; Ps. cvi. 4, 7; Heb. xiii. 3; Rev. ii. 5. Remembrance of God implieth and inferreth, 1. Turning to him, Ps. xxii. 27; 2. Trust and joy in him, Isa. li. 13; 3. Service and obedience to him, Deut. viii. 11, 19; Ps. ix. 17; Judges iii. 7; 4. Thankfulness to him, Deut. viii. 18.

Thy Creator, setteth forth God as the author and fountain of all our being out of nothing; which argueth God to be, 1. The end of all our being, Prov. xvi. 4; 2. Our preserver and governor, Isa. xl. 26; 3. Our owner and possessor and Lord, Isa. xliii. 1; 4. Intimately acquainted with all our ways, Ps. xxxiii. 15; 5. Unwilling, yea, disdaining to have his work deformed or corrupted, Deut. xxxii. 5, 6; 6. Able easily to destroy us, Ps. civ. 29, 30.

Creators, implieth more creators than one—all the three persons concurring in the work, Gen. i. 26.

Remember Jesus Christ our Redeemer, 1. As one that died and rose again for us, 2 Tim. ii. 8; 2. And without whom we are strangers from God, Eph. ii. 12; 3. In whom we become new creatures, 2 Cor. v. 17; 4. And through whom the Father is well pleased with us, Mat. iii. 17.

Remember the Holy Ghost, first, Who uniteth us to Christ, 1 Cor. vi. 17, and without whom we are carnal and sensual, Jude 19; John iii. 6. Secondly, Who sanctifieth us to God, and that in a creating way, Ps. li. 10, 11; mortifying our passions and lusts, Rom. viii. 13; quickening us to righteousness. Thirdly, Who pacieth and comforteth our consciences, John xiv. 16, 17, and that in a creating way, Ps. xxxi. 17.

*Reason 1.* From the vanity of youth and age without this remembrance of our Creators, text; Eccles. xii. 1, with chap. xi. 9.

*Reason 2.* From the benefit of this yoke upon youth, Lam. iii. 27-30.

*Reason 3.* From the sanctification of the whole lump of our life, by the sanctifying of these first-fruits, Rom. xi. 16.

*Use 1.* To reprove forgetfulness of our Creator in this time of youth. It causeth old age to perish in such, to be good for nothing, Job xx. 1-3. Youth and childhood is the seed-time of grace and all goodness. If in the spring no seed be sown, or none but cockle and darnel, and such weeds, what hope of harvest? Isa. xvii. 10, 11. From a threefold cause of difficulty, 1. Custom in sin, Jer. xiii. 29; 2. Satan's long possession, Mark ix. 21, 29; 3. God's rejection, Prov. i. 24-28.

*Use 2.* To exhort children and youth to heed this counsel. As the people said to the blind man, Arise, he calleth thee, Mark x. 49; so here God accepteth the first ripe fruits, Micah vii. 1. He taketh it then so kindly, that he will after pass by many backslidings, Jer. ii. 2, with chap. iii. 1-3. It is the ornament of youth, of young men, of maids, Jer. ii. 32.

Means by which God useth to heal such: first, Attention to the word, Ps. cxix. 9; Prov. viii. 34. Secondly, Mourning for stubbornness, and prayer for converting grace, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19. Thirdly, Abandoning of bad company, Ps. cxix. 115. Fourthly, Reforming known evils upon reproof, Prov. i. 23.

*While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, wherein thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* These words begin a description, first, Of the wearisome evils of old age, from the latter part of this verse to the end of the 6th; secondly, Of death, ver. 7; and both of them brought in as a double strong motive to urge young men in their youth to remember their Creator.

This former reason is taken from the support and remedy which the remembrance of our Creator in the days of our youth will give to the evils of old age, ver. 1-6. The latter from our dissolution and return to God in death, ver. 7.

*Doct.* The days of old age are evil and unpleasant times, and old age itself will so acknowledge it, 2 Sam. xix. 35; and yet he was of the better sort of old men, and very well provided of all helps, ver. 32, and as then but eighty years old, Gen. xlvii. 9; Ps. xc. 10.

The evils of old age are partly, 1. Natural: first, In

the estate,—the loss of dearest friends and acquaintances, Gen. xxxvii. 34, 35, and xlii. 36, and contempt of younger people, Job xxx. 11-13; secondly, In the body,—dimness and decay of all the senses, 2 Sam. xix. 34, 35, and manifold pains and aches and diseases incident to that age.

2. Moral: first, Seeking wealth greedily, yet loath to use it; secondly, Slow and cold in proceedings, yea, timorous and fearful, yet chafing at others' backwardness; thirdly, Hard to be pleased himself, and as hard to please others; fourthly, Complaining of present times, but praising former days of old, which the old men of those days as much complained of as he of these.

3. Spiritual: first, Ignorance; secondly, Uncapability and untractableness to be taught or admonished, Eccles. iv. 13; thirdly, Pride of spirit; fourthly, Deceitfulness; fifthly, Impenitency, through custom, and hardening in sin and self-conceit.

*Reason 1.* From sins of youth, Job xx. 11.

*Reason 2.* From the vanity of all creature-comforts, which must fade, Isa. xl. 6.

*Reason 3.* From the necessity of ripening in that age, either for hell or heaven, Job v. 26, in the autumn of our age.

*Reason of old men's acknowledgment of it:* From their querulous and discontented spirit.

*Doct. 3.* The remembrance of God in the days of youth is a comfortable preservative against the evil and unpleasant time of age; for as an antidote against this evil, Solomon prescribeth this. Hence the age of Abraham and David are called a good old age, Gen. xxv. 8; 1 Chron. xx. 28.

*Reason 1.* From the blessing of good old age removing and healing the contrary evils. 1. Natural: first, In the estate; friends not lost, but gone before, and we haste after them; a crown of glory instead of contempt, Prov. xvi. 31. Secondly, In the body; the power and life of faith to put strength in weakness, health in sickness, ease in pain, Heb. xi. 34; Joshua xiv. 10; the benefit of God's fear, Prov. iii. 7, 8.

2. Moral and spiritual. Corruptions now more mortified than ever, 2 Tim. iv. 7; grace more lively, powerful, and fruitful, Ps. xcii. 14; 2 Cor. iv. 16; heaven (as a haven) in view, seasoning and sweetening all, 2 Tim. iv. 8.

*Reason 2.* From the gracious and powerful presence of God to support them in age whom he hath guided in youth, Isa. xlv. 3, 4.

*Use 1.* To set on Solomon's counsel upon young men, to be the more mindful of their Creator in the days of their youth, to find the evils of old age either more fully removed, or more easily borne. If young men neglect this duty in their best times, they will be far more indisposed in their evil days.

*Use 2.* To provoke such as are entering upon old age to be more solicitous of remembering God and themselves, seeing they are hasting fast into these decays. It is a just reproof to such as take no notice of decays of nature. See the simile, Hosea vii. 9.

*Use 3.* To enforce carnal old men to redeem the opportunities that are lost. The evil of the times Paul maketh a motive to this duty, Eph. v. 15, 16.

*Ver. 2.* *While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:*

*Ver. 3.* *In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease, because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened;*

*Ver. 4.* *And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;*

*Ver. 5.* *Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond-tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:*

*Ver. 6.* *Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.*

Solomon having styled old age an evil and unpleasant time, ver. 1, he now proceedeth to describe more particularly the decays and infirmities of nature in old men, which make their days evil and unpleasant; which are of three sorts: first, Some such as befall the former part of old age, whilst as yet they are able to go abroad, ver. 2 to part of the 5th; secondly, Some of decrepit old age, when death is very near approaching, and themselves

drawing on fast to it, latter part of ver. 5, with 6, 7; thirdly, Death itself, ver. 7.

The decays and infirmities of old age, whilst as yet they are able to walk abroad, be,

First, The darkness of the lights about them, whether natural, as sun, light, (of the day when the sun is under a cloud,) moon, stars; or artificial lights, as candles, torches, &c. This darkness cometh not from the decay of those lights, but from the dimness of our sight, whence need of spectacles. I do not understand this to be a description of adversity; for though darkness be often put for adversity, and light for prosperity, yet we read not of the sun, moon, and stars put together for prosperity, nor the darkness of them put for adversity.

Secondly, The returning of the clouds after rain, is an allusion to the winterly state of old age. In summer after rain the clouds break up, and fair weather followeth; but in winter season after rain clouds still remain, and return. So, though in youth, after weeping, and coughs, and rheums dried up, the brain is clearer and drier; yet in old age, after colds, and coughs, and rheums, and pozes, there still remain and return clouds, and vapours, and fumes in the brain, through the store of superfluous and excrementitious moisture of old bodies.

Thirdly, When the keepers of the house tremble, ver. 3. Some take these keepers of the house to be the five senses, which are indeed the keepers of the body; but their decay is not fitly called trembling; and besides, of their decay he speaketh expressly in the sequel. The keepers of the house are therefore the hands and arms, which in young men are steady and strong, and do also keep both the body and house by repulsing annoyances, and providing useful things, food, raiment, &c. These tremble, grow feeble, and shake in old age.

Fourthly, The strong men bow themselves. When the thighs and legs, which in young men went straight and strong, now buckle and stoop, that an old man standeth in need of a staff to support him.

Fifthly, The grinders cease because they are few. When the teeth cease to chew meat, many of them being worn out. Teeth come not with us into the world, and they commonly leave old men, at least many of them, before they leave the world.

Sixthly, Those that look out at the windows are

darkened. When the eyes grow so dim that we cannot see well with spectacles, which is a further degree of dimness of sight than was mentioned in ver. 2.

Seventhly, The doors are shut without, when, or because, the sound of the grinding is low, ver. 4,—that is, the lips, which are the doors, Ps. cxli. 3. are shut together; when, for want of teeth to grind the meat, the meat is rolled and chavelled in the mouth, and had need of shut lips to keep it from falling out of the mouth.

Eighthly, He shall rise up at the sound of the bird. The least noise of a swallow or other bird will waken an old man, through the natural dryness of his brain, and through the weariness of any posture. In the daytime he is weary of sitting, and soon goeth to bed with the lamb; in the night he is weary of lying, and soon riseth with the lark.

Ninthly, The daughters of music are abased, when either instruments of speech fail, which make music, or instruments of hearing fail, which receive music. Speech and hearing both fail, as in Barzillai, 2 Sam. xix. 35; which is the more observable, that old men whose hearing is so quick as to be wakened with the sound of a bird, and yet the exquisiteness of the sense of hearing (to delight in the sound of music) is quite gone.

Tenthly, They shall be afraid of that which is high, and fear shall be in the way, ver. 5; because old men are afraid of climbing, in regard of the stiffness of their joints, and unwieldiness of their bodies. They fear any stumbling-stone in the way, lest it give them a fall, or anything that meeteth them, lest it throw them down.

Eleventhly, The almond-tree flourisheth. When his head groweth gray and hoary, which is a flourishing ornament, Prov. xvi. 31, but an evident decay of due moisture to nourish the hair of the head and beard. The almond-tree is the first that flourisheth in the spring, Jer. i. 11, 12, and hath his name from early blossoming; it is here a resemblance of a hoary head, yet with this difference, 1. The almond-tree flourisheth in the spring, the hoary head in the winter of our age; 2. That tree flourisheth before fruit, but the head flourisheth after it. And yet it may indeed be said that the hoary head is the flourishing of the old man in the spring of another world of immortality.

Twelfthly, The grasshopper or locust shall be a burden. Whether by his noise (but of that before in the voice of a bird, ver. 4,) or, by an hyperbole, by his weight, an old man cannot bear the lightest burden; but most fitly, his slowness of digestion. Though the locust be a clean and wholesome food, and much used in those countries, especially of the poorer sort, Lev. xi. 22; Mat. iii. 4, yet it is heavy and burdensome to an old man's stomach.

Thirteenthly, Desire faileth. Or appetite, either to meat or drink, or especially to marriage fellowship.

The latter sort of particular infirmities accompanying old age, are such decays of nature in old men as are found in their decrepit age, when they are drawing on to death, and mourners go about the streets; for they are not called till death, or till entrance into the gates of it.

First, When man goeth to his long home, that is, to the house of his age, the grave, where he shall rest whilst the world standeth, Job xiv. 12.

Secondly, The mourners go about the streets, to wit, the women skilful in mourning for the dead, and that with such affection and gesture and lamentation as to stir up mourning in a whole company, Amos v. 16; Jer. xxii. 18.

Thirdly, Or ever the silver cord be loosed, that is, the marrow of the backbone, which runneth from the brain through the neck to the bottom of the back, through twenty-four joints, and takes in therewith all the sinews; whence followeth a shaking and trembling of all the joints, and utter feebleness to use any limb without help, ver. 6. Or rather the sinews, which are the ligaments of all the members, and loosened by cold humours and palsy distempers.

Fourthly, The golden bowl is broken. When the skull is parted in the sutures or seams of it, whence the chaps fall, the almonds of the ears are stopped, part lifting up again.

For the Hebrew is the same with Golgotha, which signifieth a skull, 2 Kings ix. 35; Mat. xxvii. 33. It is a bowl because it is round, and golden, both for the colour and for the precious use of it, to contain and preserve the brain.

Fourthly, The pitcher broken at the spring, that is, the bladder is broken at the spring of water; the

issuing forth of the water, or the retentive faculty of the muscle at the neck of the bladder being broken, so that water (urine) issueth from him insensibly without stay.

Fifthly, The wheel broken at the cistern, is the lungs broken off from their motion of inspiration and respiration by phlegm from the stomach, which is as the cistern from all the body. The lungs are as a wheel transmitting the air in and out, up and down; but though there be no open passage between the stomach and the lungs, (and therefore is no ordinary purging of the lungs, but upwards by spitting and coughing,) yet when the stomach is surcharged with phlegm, it distilleth it unto the lungs and stoppeth them. Look as when a man or beast is dead, there seemeth no way of entrance into the bladder for water; no, not for air (for if you blow it full of wind, none will issue out;) and yet whilst there is life in the body, both water and sand pass through little veins into the bladder; so by the like secret passages doth the cistern of the stomach convey phlegm to the lungs, even to the stifling of them. And upon this stoppage of the lungs with phlegm, that the wheel cannot turn the air (or breath) up and down, in and out, followeth rattling in the throat, breaking off the motion of the lungs, and so death suddenly followeth.

*Doct.* 1. The wisdom of God would have young men to take particular and special notice of the decays and infirmities of old age, and by all and every of them to be stirred up to the remembrance of their Creator in the days of their youth. Solomon, the eldest son of wisdom, reckoneth up these infirmities of age, not to shew his skill, but to teach us to discern these, and to provoke us by every one of them, and much more by all together, to remember our Creator early.

*Reason* 1. From our backwardness to take notice of these decays in ourselves, much less in others, and most of all in our young time, when there are no cords in our death, Hosea vii. 9.

*Reason* 2. From the unlistness and undisposedness of old age to attend spiritual duties in the midst of bodily infirmities; as in Aaron in like bitterness, Lev. x. 19, and in the Israelites in anguish, Exod. vi. 9.

*Reason* 3. From the unsupportable wearisomeness

of these evils unto old age, when it is not eased and supported by grace.

*Use* 1. To shew us the many bitter fruits of the sin of our first parents, even to our bodies, 1. Death; 2. Strong cords to death.

*Use* 2. To teach us both the lessons Solomon here calleth upon us to learn: 1. The remembrance of these infirmities; 2. The remembrance of our Creator by them, and that in our youth, before they befall us in age.

*Obj.* But what can these crosses, and the remembrance of them, do to a kindly work of conversion? They are all but punishments of sin, and so sanctions of the law, and the law maketh nothing perfect, Heb. vii. 19.

*Ans.* First, Yet no commandment of God is vain, when the Spirit co-worketh; secondly, These infirmities, as the law itself, drive us to Christ, Gal. iii. 24; and he, 1. Taketh away our sins, John i. 29. 2. Beareth our infirmities, Mat. viii. 17; Ps. ciii. 3; and he supporteth us in them, Isa. xlv. 4, and xl. 28-31. 3. He reneweth the inner man with proportionable strength and comfort, 2 Cor. iv. 16.

*Use* 3. To comfort godly old men, in that God taketh particular notice of all their decays and infirmities.

*Ver.* 7. *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

Coherence, see in ver. 2. In these words are set forth, first, The first and last condition of the body, in regard of its material cause—dust returneth to the earth, out of which it was taken. Secondly, The first and last condition of the soul, in regard of the efficiency, cause, and disposing hand—the spirit returneth to God that gave it; meaning dust, by a metonymy of the material cause for the effect; dust for man's body made of dust, Gen. ii. 7. Return to the earth, first, By burial in the earth, after the manner of the Jews; though in burning and drowning it finally returneth to dust, to earth also. Secondly, By rotting in the grave, and dissolving to earth at last.

Spirit; soul, as being here opposed to the body. Returneth to God. Not every soul to dwell with him, for here the speech is of all men; but to be



disposed of by him for his final estate. That gave it, first, By breathing it into his face at the first creation; secondly, By forming every soul of a sinful matter of the souls of the parents, or of the spirituous part of their seed, Zech. xii. 1.

*Doct.* 1. As our bodies, being made of dust, do in death return to dust; so our souls, being given us of God, return again to God, Gen. ii. 7. The body is made, not of the heart of the earth, that is rich in metals, nor of the soil of the earth, that is rich in fruits, nor of the sand of the earth, which is profitable for ballast, for hour-glasses, or for a sea bound, Jer. v. 22, but of the dust of the earth, which of all the rest is most unprofitable, like unsavoury salt, Mat. v. 13. Stones are firm matter, clay tough, but dust easily dissipated and scattered with every blast of wind.

*Obj.* But is not our body mixed of the four elements?

*Ans.* Yes. *Reason* 1. For all these are found in us; our spirits are fiery, our breath is airy, our blood and humours watery, our flesh and bones, muscles and sinews, have much earthly matter in them.

*Reason* 2. We are nourished by all these elements.

*Reason* 3. We are dissolved into all these elements. But yet God first took dust, then wetted it and made clay of it, and fashioned it into the form of human body; hence, Job iv. 19, the first foundation and matter was dust, clay made of it, and our bodies of clay. Dust only is expressed, as being first and predominant.

*Use* 1. For instruction to all men: first, To behold God's wonderful power, wisdom, and goodness, who out of a dust-heap hath formed such a curious and glorious work, Ps. cxxxix. 14. All the devils in hell cannot suddenly make a louse of dust, Exod. viii. 18, 19; and Moses and Aaron did make but lice of dust, ver. 17. Secondly, To be lowly and humble-minded, especially when we come in God's presence, Gen. xviii. 27; Isa. xlv. 9; 1 Kings viii. 27. Thirdly, To be mindful of our mortality, Gen. iii. 19. Every blast of God's displeasure scattereth our dusty tabernacle, even of great men, Isa. xl. 15, 23, 24; and therefore to remember our Creator, and prepare for a change, Eccles. xii. 1, 7.

*Use* 2. For comfort to the godly, first, He will

not deal with us after our sins, Ps. ciii. 13, 14; secondly, To encourage us against the fear of men, whom the moth shall chavel to dust, Isa. li. 7, 8. To strengthen our faith in God's power to raise us, 1. Out of outward abasement, 1 Sam. ii. 8; 2. Out of inward abasement, Ps. cxix. 25; and 3. Out of the grave, Dan. xii. 2. Our bodies shall return to dust, that is, they shall die, corrupt, and return to dust, Gen. iii. 19; hence, Job xvii. 13, 14, xxi. 26, and xxiv. 20, it so falleth out to great men, Ps. lxxxii. 7, and mean; wise men and fools, Ps. xlix. 10; rich men and poor, Ps. xlix. 10, 16, 17; good men and bad, Ps. xxx. 9; and all men, Job xxx. 23; Isa. xl. 6, 7; except only Christ, who saw no corruption, and so no dust, Acts ii. 31, and such as remain alive at the last day, 1 Cor. xv. 51; 1 Thes. iv. 17.

*Reason* 1. From the wages of sin, Rom. xv. 12, &c.

*Reason* 2. To root out the root of sin, Rom. vi. 7. Original sin is fitly compared by Epiphanius to a wild fig tree, rooted in the joints of the stone wall of a goodly palace. If it be cut and lopped, as it is by repentance and mortification, yet it sprouteth again; but when the walls are taken down, and the stones cast asunder, body and soul parted, then being built again, the root is shaken out utterly.

*Reason* 3. To prepare the bodies of men for an immortal estate, 1 Cor. xv. 50.

*Use* 1. To refute the vanity of carnal minds, who think to escape this common condition of all men, Isa. xxviii. 15, 18.

*Use* 2. To exhort to the remembrance of our Creator, and to prepare for a change. Here we have no abiding city, we seek one to come, Heb. xiii. 14; we are but tenants at will, our tabernacles earthly.

*Use* 3. To strike terror into the hearts of the wicked, who return to dust, now accursed after the fall, Gen. iii. 17, 19. It is now the food of the serpent, Gen. iii. 14, and it is meat and drink to Satan to torment the wicked, who are accursed from God, and so depart, Mat. xxv. 41.

*Use* 4. To comfort the godly in distress, Job iii. 22. Art thou in sickness and pain? thou art but grinding to dust, and then ease. Art thou grieved with a body of sin? Rom. vii. 24; dust will set thee free. Dost thou desire to be dissolved and to be

with Christ? Phil. i. 23; dust will dissolve thee, and be a friend of the bridegroom to bring thee to Christ. The soul of every man is God's gift, Gen. ii. 7; Jer. xxxviii. 16; Zech. xii. 1; Heb. xii. 9.

*Reason.* From God's immediate hand put forth above the means in making the soul in the body, which though it be not by creation of nothing, yet it is by efformation of pre-existent matter, whether of the spirituous part of the seed, or the souls of the parents, see notes in chap. xi. 5.

*Use 1.* To employ the soul in God's service, to which end it was made, Prov. xvi. 4; yea, to return it to him with advantage, Mat. xxv. 27.

*Use 2.* To feed it with spiritual food, as word, sacraments, &c., for it is a spirit.

*Use 3.* Then God may take it again at his pleasure, Job i. 21. At death the soul returneth to God again, Luke xxiii. 43, 46; Acts vii. 59.

*Reason 1.* From the account to be made, and the reward to be received.

*Use 1.* To assure the immortality of the soul, and to reprove the brutish ignorance of such as consider it not, Eccles. iii. 21.

*Use 2.* To exhort to prepare for this return, and therefore to remember our Creator in the days of our youth.

*Use 3.* To comfort the godly in assurance of their return to God at the last.

Ver 8. *Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity.*

In these words Solomon repeateth the conclusion of the whole book, which he laid down in the beginning, chap. i. 2, and hath proved by sundry arguments throughout the book, especially by an induction of many particulars. And now having finished his proof thereof, and demonstrated, last of all, the vanity of childhood and old age, youth and death, he repeateth again his conclusion, as that which he hath fully declared, vanity of, &c.

*Doct 1.* The whole estate of the creature from first to last, and the whole estate of man from his childhood to his old age, yea, to death itself, is a state of excessive vanity, vanity of vanities, university of vanities, Rom. viii. 20.

Excess of vanity; or therefore it is called by a not vain, but *vanity* itself, yea, vanity of vanities;

which is a superlative vanity, as *holy of holies* is a superlative holiness. Vanity of vanities, for it is vanities in the plural number; vanities of many sorts; university, or universality of vanities. All is vanity. The universality of all creatures is vanity, and all vanities is found in the creatures. The vanity the creature is subject to is called the bondage of corruption, Rom. viii. 20, 21, which is not meant of natural corruption, such as might be in beasts before the fall; for when generation was to be, there was to be corruption; but would have been no vanity, because the creature had then finished his work, as the silkworm, after a sort, hath done, and so departeth. But he meaneth a corruption that fell upon the creature by the fall; which is a corruption, 1. Through enmity of one creature against another, when they also suffer most, that are most innocent, Job xii. 7, 8. 2. Through their inward debility or infirmity: whence, first, Their often abortions both in cattle, women, fruitful trees, olives, vines, and figs casting their fruit. Secondly, Their labour to bring forth what fruit they do yield, even beyond their strength; whence necessity in the soil of lying fallow, in living creatures of barrenness, Gen. iii. 17, and iv. 12; Lev. xxvi. 20. Only weeds and briers and thorns, and such fruits of the curse, are brought forth with more ease, Gen. iii. 17, 18. 3. Through abuse, by making the creatures the objects of our best affections, Ps. xx. 7; Prov. xviii. 11; Job xxxi. 24; Isa. xlv. 17; Ezek. xvi. 15. Thus we place our sovereign good in the creature comforts, and by making them instruments of wickedness, whether against God or against man, 2 Tim. iv. 10; Jonah ii. 8; Hosea ii. 8; Jer. xxii. 21, 17; Micah ii. 1, 2; Job xxiv. 15, 16.

*Reason 1.* From the fall of our first parents, Gen. iii. 17, 18.

*Reason 2.* From the sins of any person or people in succeeding generations, Gen. iv. 12; Lev. xxvi. 19, 20.

*Use.* See in notes on Eccles. xi. 7.

Ver. 9. *And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.*

From this verse to the end of the chapter is the

conclusion ; which consisteth of two parts: first, An encouragement to the reading of this and other books of Scripture, from ver. 9-12 ; secondly, The sum or scope and use of this and the other books of Scripture, to fear God and keep his commandments, set forth and confirmed by a twofold reason : first, From the complete duty of man ; secondly, From the exact judgment of God, ver. 14. The former of these, to wit, the encouragement to the reading of this and other books of Scripture, is set on by seven arguments: first, From Solomon's improvement of his wisdom to teach the people knowledge, and that proportionably, according to his wisdom. The more wise the preacher was, the more he taught the people knowledge, ver. 9.

Secondly, From the elaborate diligence in pondering or weighing, seeking out, ordering fit matter or words.

Thirdly, From the matter and frame of his words. They were words, 1. Of knowledge. 2. Of weight or power ; the word signifieth to rule or have authority, as if the words were fit to command faith and obedience, ver. 9. 3. Acceptable words ; words of delight, ver. 10. 4. Upright. 5. Of truth, ver. 10.

Fourthly, From their efficacy, as, 1. Goads ; 2. Nails, ver. 11.

Fifthly, From their authority. 1. Ministerial, fastened by the masters of assemblies ; 2. Principal or sovereign, given by one pastor, ver. 11.

Sixthly, From their sufficiency : of these, my son, be enlightened, or admonished, ver. 12.

Seventhly, From the vanity and wearisomeness of reading many other books, ver. 12.

*Doct.* The more wise a governor, or ruler, especially a preacher is, the more he teacheth the people knowledge. If it be read, Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge, it comes to the same issue ; for if the wisdom of Solomon caused him to teach the people knowledge, then the more wise a man is, the more his wisdom will incline him to teach men knowledge. But in Solomon's phrase it is used in way of comparison, as Eccles. ii. 15 ; however this is evident, it is the wisdom of a ruler, especially of a preacher, to teach the people knowledge, 2 Chron. xvii. 7-9 ; Col. ii. 1, 2 ; 1 Cor. x. 1, xii. 1, and xiv. 18-20 ; 1 Thes. iv. 13 ; 2 Pet. iii. 8 ; Jer. iii. 15.

*Reason 1.* From wise men's knowledge of the excellency of knowledge, which ignorant men know not, and therefore regard not, Prov. i. 22 ; Eccles. ii. 13, 14, and vii. 12 ; Prov. xix. 2 ; Hosea iv. 6 ; Isa. xxvii. 11.

*Reason 2.* From their calling. They have a pastoral charge of the people, yea, of the souls of the people ; rulers, Ps. lxxviii. 70-72 ; 2 Sam. xxiv. 17 ; preachers, Heb. xiii. 17. God giveth to none power of the bodies of his people, but he giveth them also charge over their souls, see ver. 1.

*Reason 3.* For regard to their own comfort. Ignorant subjects will be either, 1. Rebels, and unruly, 2 Chron. xv. 3, 5, 6 ; 2. Flatterers, Hosea vii. 3, 5. 3. Barbarians. Ignorant people will be either, 1. Unprofitable hearers, Jer. v. 3, 4 ; 2. Persecutors, which is worse, Acts iii. 17 ; 1 Tim. i. 13.

*Use 1.* To teach all men of wisdom that have people under them, whether in church, as preachers ; commonwealth, as magistrates ; family, as parents, masters ; that it is a part of your wisdom to teach your people knowledge ; and the more wisdom, the more to teach them knowledge. Preachers, Jer. iii. 15 ; magistrates, as before ; householders to their wives, 1 Pet. iii. 17 ; children, Eph. vi. 4 ; Deut. vi. 7 ; servants, Gen. xviii. 19 ; schoolmasters and tutors, Prov. xxx.

Magistrates teach knowledge, not only as Solomon here, by writing, but first, By providing and sending forth good ministers, 2 Chron. xvii. 7-9 ; secondly, By erecting and publishing good laws, Deut. iv. 5, 6, especially for the free passage of true religion, Ezra vii. 23 ; thirdly, By removing stumbling-blocks (teachers of lies) out of the way, 2 Chron. xvii. 6 ; fourthly, By punishment of evil-doers, Judges viii. 17, 16 ; Prov. xix. 25, and xxi. 11 ; fifthly, By preferment and encouragement of well-doers, Prov. xxii. 11 ; Ps. ci. 6 ; sixthly, by example, Ps. cxxii. 1, 2.

Ministers teach knowledge, first, By dispensing ordinances, Jer. xxx. 15 ; secondly, By exemplary conversation, 1 Tim. iv. 12. Householders teach by catechising, Prov. xxii. 6 ; wholesome discipline, Prov. xxix. 15 ; and godly example, 1 Chron. xxviii. 19.

All of them teach by maintenance of schools of good learning, Acts vii. 22, else knowledge is more hard to be attained, John vii. 15.

*Use 2.* To teach people to be as willing to learn knowledge, else how shall others teach knowledge ?

masters of assemblies; 3. For their calling, given by one pastor, as in the former doctrine.

*Use 2.* To teach the masters of assemblies how the word should be handled, wisely according to the sense of Scripture, and to the estate of the people. As goads, 1. Sharply, piercingly, Titus i. 13, quickening a dull spirit, Ps. cxix. 93; 2. Subduing and wounding an enemy, whether lust or gainsayer, (as Shamgar's goad, Judges iii. 31,) 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; Titus i. 9. As nails, 1. Driving at first the sharp but final end into the heart, things that may most easily sink and take place, and enter, Heb. v. 11-13; 2. Following the word with stronger matter, which may hold the heart strongly and closely to God, to brethren, and to duty.

*Implanted.* This is done by dispensing the word, 1. In faithful simplicity, Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. Human wit and authorities added to it do but adulterate it, like as paint do marble, or as honey and wine in children's milk; as painted glass windows darken the light; as a bombasted sword hindereth cutting. 2. In manifestation of the Spirit, breathing and speaking in the Scripture, and breathing and speaking in the hearts and words and lives of ministers. Hence power, 1 Cor. ii. 2-4; 2 Cor. xiii. 3, 4.

*Use 3.* To teach us the state of the people without masters of the assemblies, to be wanting, first, In heavenly wisdom, Jer. iv. 22. Secondly, In forwardness; hence need of a goad to prick them forward. Heb. v. 11. Thirdly, In steadfastness; hence need of nails to fasten them, Eph. iv. 14.

*Use 4.* For trial, when the word hath had his kindly and true effect, and work in us—to wit, first, When it quickeneth us; secondly, When it strengtheneth us; thirdly, When it is implanted in us.

*Use 5.* To teach us to make use of Christ as our shepherd, whether we be masters of assemblies, or sheep fed by them.

Ver. 12. *And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.*

In these words, as in the former, Solomon exhorteth his son, and in him all his subjects, and in his subjects all Christians, yea, all men, to be admonished by these books of Scripture, whether

penned by Solomon or other masters of the assemblies. See this former argument in ver. 9.

In this verse, first, From the sufficiency of these books: 'By these, my son, be thou admonished.' Secondly, From the unprofitableness and wearisomeness of making and studying many other books: 'Of making many books there is no end; and much study a weariness of the flesh.'

*Doct.* It is the duty of every son of wisdom to be admonished by the books of Scripture, whether written by Solomon or by other prophets; whether sharpened or fastened by the masters of assemblies, Ps. xix. 11.

To be admonished implieth three things: first, To be enlightened, making the word a light or lantern, Ps. cxix. 105; so the word is translated *shine* as the light, Dan. xii. 3, or brightness. Secondly, To be warned, and so, first, Reclaimed from evil of sin; secondly, Preserved from evil of punishment approaching, Ezek. iii. 17-21, and xxxiii. 4-6. Thirdly, To be made circumspect to duty; so the word is translated *take heed*, Ezra iv. 22, and so used, Ps. xix. 11.

*Reason 1.* From our relation to God and his prophets. We are their children, they therefore are our fathers: 'My son,' text; Acts iii. 25. God is our father and master, Mal. i. 6, and therefore all his words are warnings, (as of the centurion to his servants, Mat. viii. 9.)

*Reason 2.* From the benefit of taking warnings, and great danger of the contrary, Ps. xix. 11; Col. i. 28; Ezek. iii. 17-21, and xxxiii. 4, 5.

*Reason 3.* From the sufficiency of Scripture to that end, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. If they suffice not, none else will, Luke xvi. 29, 31.

*Reason 4.* From the unprofitableness, or boundless endlessness of reading or writing many books. One book allegeth and referreth to another; neither doth a man studious of books know where to stint himself. Hence falleth in, 1. Vanity, as of many words, so of many books; 2. Impotency of concocting them; 3. Fastidious loathing of Scriptures.

*Reason 5.* From the wearisomeness of much study to the flesh. It beateth and heateth the brain, it intendeth and stretcheth the mind, as if the body were set upon the rack, yea, sometimes to the breaking of a man's wit, as the string of an instrument stretched

too high or too far. As in wrestling, so in studying, there is a striving, then weariness, then despair of overcoming, then giving over, then taking up, striving again, and so, &c. Much study drieth up the sweetest moisture of the body, whether blood or marrow, consumeth the cheerful spirits, whether of brain or heart, and so breedeth morosity, harshness of spirit, troublesome to a man's self and others.

*Use 1.* To refute the additions of the decrees of popes, of the apocrypha, of the canons, of councils, of the traditions of fathers to the Scriptures, for the direction of faith and life, Prov. xxx. 6.

*Use 2.* To teach us what we are without the Scriptures; dark, and want enlightening; stubborn, and want breaking and warning; rash, and want circumspect guiding.

*Use 3.* To reprove the stubbornness of most men, who will not be warned nor enlightened by the Scriptures, nor made circumspect, Jer. xlv. 16, 17. Such will profit by no means else, Luke xvi. 29–31.

*Obj.* Yes, by affliction and correction.

*Ans.* No, not without instruction from the word, Prov. vi. 23. It is a sign God will destroy such, 1 Sam. ii. 25; 2 Chron. xxv. 16; Prov. xxix. 1; Deut. xxix. 19–21. The meanest child that will be warned is better than such, Eccles. iv. 13. A man that will not be admonished will become poor, though a king.

*Use 4.* To teach such as are to warn others, to warn them from the Scriptures—from every vice to every duty; as Paul convinced the Jews, Acts xxviii. 23.

*Use 5.* To wean us from the vanity of affectation of much reading.

*Obj.* Much reading and study, 1. Helpeth a barren wit and weak judgment, by inventing new things, and clearing and confirming the old; 2. Solomon himself wrote many books, 1 Kings iv. 32, 33.

*Ans.* Solomon's books that were not Scripture are lost, lest we should attribute too much light to them; therefore no books for this admonition in ways of religion to be attended to but the Scriptures; others so far as they explain or apply these.

Secondly, Books for other ends not so much to be sought after for variety, but for choice.

Thirdly, Those books we do use, we should seek to digest them by sound judgment and serious meditation.

Ver. 13. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*

These two last verses contain a second part of the conclusion of the whole chapter. The former was a pithy exhortation to receive this book, and other books of Scripture penned and opened by the masters of the assemblies, and given by Christ, ver. 9–12.

This latter is a consecratory of the sum and scope of the whole book, which is summed up in these two: Fear God; Keep his commandments. Which is amplified by an introduction calling for audience and intention: Let us hear the end (sum, conclusion) of the whole matter, to wit, of the whole foregoing discourse of the vanities of the creatures, and of all the conditions thereof. And confirmed by a twofold argument: 1. From the sum of man's duty and safety; for this (to fear God and to keep his commandments) is the whole of man, the whole duty of man, ver. 13; the whole safety and stay of man; that which stayeth with him. 2. From the strict exactness of the last judgment, ver. 14.

*Doct.* 1. It is a conclusion worthy of all attention, that the ends and scope of discovering and discerning all earthly vanities, is to fear God and keep his commandments; the same course John Baptist took to the same end, Isa. xl. 6–8. It is a conclusion worthy of all attention; for Solomon calleth upon himself as well as upon all his people: 'Let us hear,' &c.; as a cock clappeth his own sides with his wings, to stir up himself before he awaken others with his crowing. For clearing this point it would be opened, 1. What is the fear of God? 2. What are meant by his commandments? 3. What is meant by the keeping of them?

The fear of God, it is a holy affection of the heart, whereby we are affected towards God offended with the greatest terror, and towards God reconciled with greatest reverence, Heb. xii. 28; godly fear, Isa. viii. 13; Ps. xc. 11, and exix. 53; Luke xii. 4, 5; Heb. xii. 28; Ps. cxxx. 4; Exod. xv. 11; fearful in praise, Hosea iii. 5. Hence being

affected to God offended with greatest terror, first, We eschew all sin whereby God is offended, whether man take notice of it or no, Job i. 8, and xxxi. 21, 23. Secondly, No worldly dangers feared so much as God's displeasure, Luke xii. 4, 5. Thirdly, No matter so weighty as to seek Christ, in whom our reconciliation is wrought, 2 Cor. v. 11, 14.

Hence being affected to God reconciled with greatest reverence, first, Christ in whom we are reconciled is most revered and adored, Ps. cxxx. 4, and most closely cleaved to, Jer. xxxii. 40. Secondly, His word most venerable and awful, Isa. lxvi. 2; Ps. cxix. 161. Thirdly, Our own ability is distrusted, and we walk in awful dependence on Christ in our whole service of God, Phil. ii. 12, 13; Heb. xii. 28; Rom. xi. 20; 1 Pet. i. 17, 18. Reverence arising from apprehension of his transcendent greatness and goodness, we worship him, and endeavour to approve ourselves to him, to be accepted of him.

2. The commandments, be the ten commandments, Deut. iv. 13, which is further explained in the gospel by believing on Christ, 1 John iii. 23.

3. To keep these commandments is set forth by comparisons; as our way, Joshua i. 7; as our treasure, Rev. iii. 20, 21; as the apple of our eye, Prov. vii. 2; and as our life and soul, Prov. xix. 16; that is, with all diligence, faithfulness, tenderness, and pre-eminence.

*Reason 1.* From the whole of man wrapt up in the fear of God and keeping his commandments, it is our whole perfection and safety. Life maketh us equal to a plant, sense to a beast, reason to a man, grace (fearing God and keeping his commandments) to angels, Luke xx. 36; Isa. vi. 2; Ps. ciii. 20. It completeth our conformity to the image of God. It is our whole duty, and attaineth an everlasting happy estate, Deut. v. 29, else we walk in vanity, Ps. xxxix. 5, 6, and fear death, hell, the faces of men.

*Reason 2.* From the vanity of seeking after God's fear, and yet not weaned from the vanities of the world, Mark vi. 20.

*Reason 3.* From the vanity of weanedness from earthly vanities, without learning the fear of God and keeping his commandments; such was all the devotion of popery, leaving great estates, yea,

kingdoms to live and die in a friar's cow], Isa. i. 11-13.

*Reason 4.* Of the attention due to this word and counsel, first, From the dulness of our hearing, Heb. ver. 11; secondly, From the weightiness of the duty, text; thirdly, From the noise of worldly matters and inbred lusts hindering our attention.

*Use 1.* To refute the Antinomians, who abrogate the commandments, and in sum hold forth grace without Christ, Christ without faith, faith without the word of promise applied particularly to me by the Spirit, and the word of the gospel without the word of the law.

*Use 2.* To teach us to make these two duties our whole work, Deut. v. 29.

Ver. 14. *For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

In the former verse Solomon gave it for a conclusion of the whole book, 'Fear God, and keep his commandments.'

Which duty he presseth by a twofold argument: first, From the weight of the duty—it is the sum and safety of the whole man, ver. 13; secondly, From the universal and strict account which God will take of every work done under the sun, text, ver. 14. So this last end of the book is the last end of the world.

*Doct.* There is no work, whether it be open or secret, good or evil, but God will bring it to judgment.

No work, whether, first, Of the heart, as counsels, thoughts, affections, 2 Cor. iv. 5; Jer. xvii. 9, 10; secondly, Of the lips, as words, Mat. xii. 36; Jude 15; thirdly, Of the hands, or other outward members of the body, 2 Cor. v. 10; Eccles. xi. 9; Ps. l. 21; not only of all the children of men, but even of evil angels also, 1 Cor. vi. 3.

Though never so secret. ועלם, *absconditum, velatum*, hidden or secret, so the word signifieth; not as the vulgar Latin turneth it, *erratum*, absurdly; for when he saith, *pro omni errato, sive bonum, sive malum sit*, it argueth some *erratum* is *bonum*. But if it be an *erratum*, an error or fault, how is it good? if good, how is it *erratum*, an error or fault? See then their vanity that think the vulgar Latin authentical, or the church of Rome infallible.

God will bring all to judgment. Many things in this world, Prov. xi. 31 ; Ps. lviii. 10, 11 ; all things whatsoever at the last day, 2 Cor. v. 10 ; Rom. ii. 16 ; Acts xvii. 31 ; Mat. xxv. 31-46.

*Reason 1.* It is for the honour of God to rectify all the iniquity of judgment-seats, and other obliquities here below, Eccles. v. 8, and iii. 16, 17, with Micah vii. 3, 4. As his infinite wisdom knoweth all iniquity, so his infinite justice cannot but give due recompense to all.

*Reason 2.* It is for the honour of Christ, John v. 23, 29. To declare the honour, first, Of his power, in raising the dead by his voice, John v. 28, 29. Secondly, Of his glory, Mat. xxv. 31 ; all the elements burning about him, 2 Pet. iii. 10 ; all the angels and saints attending him, each one as bright as the sun, Mat. xxv. 31 ; Jude 14 ; a glorious high throne set in the air for him, Mat. xxv. 31 ; all the creatures presented before him, and bowing to him, Rom. xiv. 10, 11. Thirdly, The honour of his wisdom, in making manifest the secret counsels of all hearts, with all secret conveyances, and that particularly, 1 Cor. iv. 5 ; Luke xii. 2. Fourthly, Of his justice ; both shewing the cause of all his own administrations, why often it went ill with the godly, and well with the wicked, Isa. xxviii. 17 ; and rewarding all according to their works and the fruits of them, Jer. xvii. 10 ; which will not be accomplished whilst the world lasteth ; neither the good that some have done by their laws, books, counsels, examples, &c., nor the evil of others.

*Reason 3.* It is for the honour of the church, and of all the godly, 2 Thes. i. 10 ; Micah vii. 9.

*Use 1.* For information, first, That the account taken at the last day will be general, of all nations and persons ; and also particular, of every singular cause and person, Rom. xiv. 12 ; Mat. xii. 36 ; Ps. l. 21 ; and that not secret, but open, so as all men may judge of all secret conveyances, Luke xii. 2 ; 1 Cor. iv. 5. Secondly, That the day of judgment will be of longer continuance than a night or day, for so many businesses of all nations and persons cannot be examined openly in the space of a few hours or years ; the day of grace is of many years, 1 Cor. vi. 2, so also is that of judgment.

*Use 2.* To exhort to repentance and faith, that he who shall be our judge may be our Saviour, Acts xvii. 30, 31 ; 1 Cor. xi. 31 ; 2 Thes. i. 10.

*Use 3.* To bridle all licentiousness and boldness in sin, and pleasure in it, Eccles. xi. 9 ; Acts xxiv. 25.

*Use 4.* To exhort to sincere and conscionable, awful and fruitful obedience, 1 Pet. i. 17 ; 2 Pet. iii. 11-14 ; 2 Cor. v. 9, 10 ; text, ver. 13, 14 ; Luke xii. 1, 2 ; 1 Cor. xv. 58.

*Use 5.* To exhort to judge others sparingly and charitably, 1 Cor. iv. 5 ; Rom. xiv. 10 ; Mat. vii. 1, 2 ; James ii. 13 ; but to provoke them earnestly to prepare for this day, 2 Cor. v. 10, 11.

*Use 6.* To encourage the saints to patience, constancy, and comfort in well-doing and ill-suffering, 1 Cor. xv. 58 ; 1 Thes. iv. 2, 17 ; 2 Thes. i. 6, 7.





A BRIEF EXPOSITION

OF THE

WHOLE BOOK OF CANTICLES;

OR,

SONG OF SOLOMON.

BY

JOHN COTTON.

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M.DCCC.LXVIII.



# THE CANTICLES; OR, SONG OF SONGS, OPENED AND EXPLAINED.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE TEXT.

VER. 1. *The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.*

Ver. 2. *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth : for thy love is better than wine.*

Ver. 3. *Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.*

Ver. 4. *Draw me, we will run after thee : the king hath brought me into his chambers : we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine : the upright love thee.*

Ver. 5. *I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.*

Ver. 6. *Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me : my mother's children were angry with me ; they made me the keeper of the vineyards ; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*

Ver. 7. *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon : for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions ?*

Ver. 8. *If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.*

Ver. 9. *I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.*

Ver. 10. *Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.*

Ver. 11. *We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.*

Ver. 12. *While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.*

Ver. 13. *A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me ; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.*

Ver. 14. *My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.*

Ver. 15. *Behold, thou art fair, my love ; behold, thou art fair ; thou hast doves' eyes.*

Ver. 16. *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant : also our bed is green.*

Ver. 17. *The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.*

### THE EXPLANATION.

Ver. 1. *The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.*

Ver. 2. *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth : for thy love is better than wine.*

It was the manner of ancient times at espousals and nuptials to indite and sing epithalamia, love-songs, Ruth iv. 11, 12. The title of the forty-fifth Psalm may seem to be penned by one of the chief singers of the temple, who now were all of them prophets, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, 1 Chron. xxv. 1-5, upon occasion of Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter ; for though she was a stranger by birth from the commonwealth of Israel, yet his marriage was lawful with her. And therefore, notwithstanding this marriage, his love to God is still commended : 1 Kings iii. 1, 3, 'Solomon

made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Solomon loved the Lord,' &c.; for indeed herein Solomon was,

First, A type of Christ, admitting the Gentiles into the fellowship of his marriage-bed.

Secondly, This Pharaoh's daughter became a proselyte to the Jewish religion: Ps. xlv. 10-14, 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house,' &c.

Now, though that marriage song was penned upon that occasion, yet it ascendeth far above all earthly respects of worldly marriage, and by a divine and heavenly workmanship sets forth a heavenly marriage song between Christ and his church. Of like argument was this song penned by Solomon himself, not to express his affections to Pharaoh's daughter, or hers to him, or the good parts of either of them, no, nor the like respects to any Shunammite amongst the rest of his wives, as some have vainly conceived, for then how absurd and monstrous were some of his comparisons—likening his spouse to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot; her head to Carmel; her eyes to fish-pools; her nose to a tower; her teeth to a flock of sheep; her whole self to a terrible army with banners—but his scope is to describe the estate of the church towards Christ, and his respect towards her, from his own time to the last judgment, as afterward it shall appear.

Now, through this whole marriage song this decorum it keepeth, that though the calamities of the church be as well described throughout this song as the comfortable condition of the same in all ages, yet such dismal passages are veiled and shadowed under some sweet and amiable resemblances, lest the joy of a marriage feast should be darkened by unseasonable mention of so sad occurrences; neither are all the passages of the estate of the church in every age here described, (for how can that be in so short a song?) but the chief heads of things in every age are sweetly, and shortly, and lively, not only pointed at, but deciphered. These verses contain,

First, The title of the whole book, ver. 1.

Secondly, The description of the estate of the church in the days, first, Of Solomon, ver. 2-4; secondly, Of Solomon and Rehoboam, ver. 5.

Thirdly, Of Rehoboam, ver. 6-9.

In the title we have,

First, The form of the book: it is a song.

Secondly, The excellency of it: a song of songs.

Thirdly, The author of it: which is Solomon's.

'The song of songs,' &c. In Col. iii. 16 there is mention made,

First, Of psalms.

Secondly, Hymns.

Thirdly, Spiritual songs.

Amongst the Hebrews there were psalms made to be sung with instruments, as well as with voice, and contained arguments of all sorts for petition, thanksgiving, and instruction.

Songs were chiefly made for the voice.

Hymns are properly praises of God, though any of these are sometimes put for all.

*Use 1.* First, This doth let us see that it were to be wished that this book were turned into verse or metre in each language, that we might sing the Canticles as the Hebrews did.

*Use 2.* Secondly, This teaches us to strive for such a gracious frame of spirit, that we might always be fitted to sing to God.

This song contains the estate of the church as well in the worst as best times, yet Solomon can as well sing in the misery of the church as in her prosperity; and David, Ps. lxxix. 2, hath as well psalms of his deep waters and calamities, as of his greatest deliverances; and the Holy Ghost saith, 'Rejoice in the Lord always,' Phil. iv. 4. And though singing be chiefly fit and requisite in mirth, James v. 13, yet we should be fit also for a psalm in our affliction. But we commonly in our ill hours are too sullen to sing, and in our merry moods our spirits vanish away in carnal mirth and jollity; but whatsoever the estate of the church be, we should have our spirits as ready to sing as to pray.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, Is reproved that ancient law and custom of the synagogue, which prohibited young men, under thirty years of age, the reading and use of this book; but what age fitter for songs than cheerful youth? And further, the amorousness of the ditty will not stir up wantonness in any age if the words be well understood; but rather, by inflaming with heavenly love, will draw out, and burn up all earthly and carnal lust; and even as fire in

the hand is drawn out by holding it to a stronger fire, or as the light and heat of the sun extinguisheth a kitchen fire, so doth heavenly love to Christ extinguish base kitchen lusts.

'A song of songs,' ver. 1—that is, a most excellent song, the chiefest of songs; as when they would express the holy place, they say, The Holy of holies, the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the servant of servants, Exod. xxvi. 33; a Hebrew superlative. So this is the chiefest song; first of all Solomon's other songs, even of his thousand and five, 1 Kings iv. 32.

Secondly, Of all songs without exception; for though David was in his time the sweet singer of Israel, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, yet as Solomon's throne exceeded his in all other magnificence, so did his name exceed his also, 1 Kings i. 47. Yet this is no disparagement to the other songs; so neither that some of David's psalms should be styled golden psalms, Ps. xvi. 52, 56–58; all purified gold, Ps. xii. 6. Yet some gold wrought more exquisitely than others, and finer engraven than others; even some portion of the pure and holy word of God more exquisitely penned and polished than other.

*Reason 1.* The first reason why this song is more excellent than others, is because this song speaketh not only of the chiefest matter, to wit, Christ and his church, but also more largely than any of David's psalms, and with more store of more sweet and precious, exquisite and amiable resemblances, taken from the richest jewels, the sweetest spices, gardens, orchards, vineyards, wine-cellars, and the chiefest beauties of all the works of God and man.

*Reason 2.* Secondly, This song admitteth more variety of interpretation than any other, and also of singular use. Some have applied it to express the mutual affection and fellowship between Christ and every Christian soul; some between Christ and the Catholic church; some to particular churches, from Solomon's time to the last judgment. And there is a holy and useful truth in each one of these interpretations; but the last doth exceedingly magnify the wonderful excellency of this song, making it a divine abridgment of the acts and monuments of the church. And that this book was chiefly penned to be such a historical prophecy or prophetical history may appear,

First, By the correspondency or suitableness of the words of this song to the events of each age.

Secondly, By the repetition of the same description, and other occurrences in divers parts of this song, which would be a needless tautology if it were spoken of the same persons in the same time, as you may see if you compare chap. iv. 2, with vi. 6; and ii. 7, with iii. 5; and viii. 3, 4, 6, with viii. 5.

*Reason 3.* Thirdly, By the diversities of descriptions of some persons, chap. iii. 3, 6, with v. 7–9, which would intimate and imply a contradiction if they were not spoken of several times and several persons.

*Reason 4.* Fourthly, By the sudden admiration of some new persons and occurrences, chap. iii. 6, vi. 10, and viii. 5.

*Use 1.* First, We may here see the eldest son of wisdom giveth the double portion of excellency to this song above all others; yea, since the Holy Ghost giveth it; it is not therefore only canonical Scripture, but an eminent portion of it. It were profane blasphemy to prefer this song above other songs of holy Scripture, if it were not also given by divine inspiration as well as they; to prefer the invention of man before the wisdom of God were sacrilegious madness. And although none of God's ten proper names in Hebrew be once mentioned in this song, yet that impeacheth not the authority of this book more than it doth of Esther, where no name of God is mentioned at all. Besides, this book is full of such names of God as suit more with the arguments, as, well-beloved, brother, shepherd, O thou whom my soul loveth, the chiefest of ten thousand, chap. i. 7–9, and v. 10.

*Use 2.* Secondly, This must exhort us to a more studious reading and meditating of this book, as of a most excellent portion of holy writ.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, This shews us that as this scripture is canonical, so the penman of it is a canonical saint in heaven; for he must needs be so, according to that, not of Peter's successor, as the papists would have it, but of St Peter himself: 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Pet. i. 21; so that he must needs be a saint by St Peter's confession. And not he only, but Christ himself saith, 'All the prophets are in the kingdom of God,' Luke xiii. 28. Now

all the prophets came not near this prophet, and there was no Scripture but it was penned by a prophetic and apostolic spirit ; and though Solomon did fall, yet, 'If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, &c. But my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul,' 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15. If some say, by this it was meant that God would not take away his kingdom ; to this it is answered, he did take it away, but he would not deal with him as he dealt with Saul ; so then this telleth us Solomon is a saint in heaven.

'Which is Solomon's,' ver. 1. Solomon the penner of it, but a wiser than Solomon indited it. The Holy Ghost maketh choice of his instruments according to the use he had to put them to ; to set forth the estate of his church by the choicest treasures of nature, he useth Solomon's spirit, which was as large as the sand of the sea-shore, 1 Kings iv. 29, 30 ; Deut. xxxiv. 1-4. And as God led Moses to the top of mount Pisgah to behold all the places and situations of Israel, so he lifted up Solomon's spirit to the mountain of activity, that I may so speak, where only all times to come are present, to behold the estate of the church throughout the present, and all after times.

*Use 1.* This is to teach us, as it was said before, that Solomon is a canonised saint, else he had not been a penman of canonical Scripture ; canonised, not by Peter's pretended successors, who have shamefully erred in this kind, but by Peter himself, 2 Pet. i. 21, yea, by a greater than Peter or Solomon, even Christ Jesus, Luke xiii. 28. That promise, 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15, reacheth further than to prefer Solomon before Saul in reserving the kingdom to his posterity, which he took from Saul ; for even from Solomon's posterity the kingdom was cut off in Jeconiah. The promise therefore of mercy to Solomon above Saul reached to the bestowing of a heavenly kingdom upon him. Besides, in that place, two blessings are promised :

First, Adoption : 'I will be his father,' &c.

Secondly, Establishment in God's house and kingdom ; so that if the latter promise should not evince his perseverance, yet the former doth.

*Use 2.* Secondly, This is to stir us up to the reading and meditation of this book the more for the penman's sake.

The second, third, and fourth verses sing and shew forth the estate of the church in Solomon's time ; ver. 5, the estate of the church as well in Solomon's time as in Rehoboam's. The verses following, to the ninth, the estate of the church in all the time of Rehoboam.

In the church of Solomon's time, four passages are chiefly observable :

First, Solomon's choice of heavenly wisdom, by which chiefly we enjoy sweet and familiar fellowship with God, Prov. viii. 34, 35 ; 1 Kings iii. 5, 10 ; this is expressed, ver. 2.

Secondly, The sweet savour and fame of Solomon's gifts and graces, ver. 3, to the winning of the love and admiration of the sons of men.

Thirdly, The drawing and gathering of all Israel to the king's chambers, the courts of Solomon's temple, ver. 4, or his care to bring on his people to the public worship of God, and their respect of him in regard thereof.

Fourthly, The fall and deformity of the church by idolatrous worship, and toleration thereof in many, ver. 5 ; and yet the keeping of the native beauty of the church in many others.

'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,' &c., ver. 2. It is a prayer of the church, or, which is all one, some chief member of it, for a pledge of Christ's sweet and familiar acquaintance, and love, and fellowship with her. Kisses are pledges and incentives of love : 'Men shall kiss his lips that answereth upright words,' Prov. xxiv. 26. This is the effect of upright answers, men kiss his lips ; but God kissing a man's lips is the cause of man's answering upright words. His breathing into our mouths a right answer maketh us speak accordingly ; as, on the contrary, when one answers perversely, unjustly, erroneously, Satan then hath kissed them with his kisses ; he hath sitten as a lying spirit in their mouths, 1 Kings xxii. 23, 24.

'The kisses of his mouth,' which is more than the kisses of his lips ; the one is a silent gesture of love, the other implieth also amiable speeches, when Christ,

First, By the voice of his word, or,

Secondly, By the breath of his spirit, doth either,

First, Put wisdom or grace into our hearts, Ps. cxix. 98, or,

Secondly, Speak peace or comfort to our souls, Ps. cxix. 110.

'I create the fruit of the lips ; Peace, peace,' &c., Isa. lvii. 19. Solomon's wisdom is the grace of God, as wickedness is folly. The beginning of this wisdom is the fear of God, Prov. xvii. ; the end of it is the keeping of God's commandments, Eccles. xii. 13. This wisdom whoso finds, finds Christ, the wisdom of the Father, Prov. viii. 22, 35, in whom God is well pleased with us, Mat. iii. 17, and in whom he, as it were, kisseth us. This wisdom doth not only enable us to walk godly to our salvation, but likewise fits us to go in and out before our families, before our people, and so enlarges us to all duties of our callings ; and to walk in the ways of this wisdom brings peace to our souls, and to those that live under us : 'All her paths are peace,' Prov. iii. 17.

'For thy love is better than wine.' The favour of God in giving wisdom, and thereby peace to a man's self, and others depending on him, is more worth than wine ; that is, than whatsoever makes the heart of man glad, Ps. civ. 15, and iv. 67 ; Prov. iii. 13-15, and xxxi. 6, 7 ; Judges ix. 13. This prayer was poured out by Solomon, the chiefest member of the church in this time, when he prayed for wisdom, and preferred it before long life, riches, victory over his enemies, &c., 1 Kings iii. 5, 9, 11 ; 2 Chron. i. 7, 10, 11 ; Prov. xvi. 10.

Or else this whole verse may express the desire of the church to Solomon, that he would express his love to her by his divine sentences, and books, and songs, Eccles. xii. 9, which are better than their civil peace, than the sitting under their own vine and fig-tree, 1 Kings iv. 25.

'Because of the savour of thy good ointments.' Good ointments are the gifts and graces of God's Spirit : 'But the anointing which ye have received of him,' &c., 1 John ii. 27 ; so called because they heal a broken heart, as oil, Luke x. 34 ; Isa. lxi. 3. The oil of God's grace heals the bruises of the soul.

Secondly, As oil doth make the face to shine, so do they, Ps. civ. 15 ; Eccles. viii. 1.

Thirdly, As by the holy oils all the vessels of the tabernacle were consecrated, Exod. x. 23, 31, so by these graces all the vessels of mercy are consecrated to God.

Fourthly, By the ointment were anointed to their

offices kings, 1 Sam. xvi. 3, and x. 1 ; priests, Exod. xl. 13, 15 ; and some prophets, 1 Kings xix. 16 ; so by these graces are we anointed to God our Father in Christ, Acts i. 8, and ii. 4, 7 ; kings, priests, and prophets, Rev. i. 6 ; John xii. 3. Saviour is the manifestation of these graces, as ointments are manifested by their savour.

'Thy name is as an ointment poured forth,' ver. 3—that is, precious, sweet, and famously renowned —'therefore do the virgins love thee.' The virgins in this song are such as Christ hath not yet espoused to himself, nor spoken for in way of marriage, chap. viii. 8, and vi. 8, such as carnal Jews or the Gentiles.

'Love thee,' ver. 3—that is,

First, Honourably esteem thee.

Secondly, Affect thy sight and fellowship.

Thirdly, Seek after thee. This was fulfilled in Solomon, 1 Kings xxviii., iv. 31, 34, v. 7, and x. 1, 7-9. His own people revered him, even all of them ; his name was famous in all nations round about him ; all the kings sent to him, and of all people some came to hear his wisdom. The queen of Sheba cometh from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear it, and counteth his people happy under it, 1 Kings x. 1, 2. Hiram king of Tyre blessed God for his wisdom, 1 Kings v. 7.

'Draw me,' ver. 4. It will be the speech of Solomon to Christ, praying that Christ would draw him to the Father, near unto him in holy duties, and promising to bring all the people to run with him after God. Or it may be the speech of the church to Solomon, desiring him to draw them together, by public edicts and proclamations, to the solemn duties of God's worship, and promising to come freely, to run together willingly in the times of such assemblies, which was done, 2 Chron. ii. 2, 3.

'The king hath brought me into his chambers,' ver. 4,—that is, into those bride-chambers where Christ familiarly converseth with them ; which were three :

First, The tabernacle at Gibeon.

Secondly, The ark at Jerusalem.

Thirdly, The temple.

Into these Solomon brought the whole congregation of Israel to solemn sacrifices, 2 Chron. i. 2-6 ; 1 Kings viii. 5, 14, 63.

The words following in this verse shew a three-fold respect which the people are to Solomon.

First, They rejoiced in him.

Secondly, They remember his love better than wine.

Thirdly, The upright love him.

Their rejoicing in him is recorded, 1 Kings viii. 66 ; their remembrance of his love more than wine is there also implied ; for, departing from the meeting with such glad hearts, they afterward remembered the comfort thereof as more blessed than the peaceable living under their own vine and fig-tree. The love of the upright to him continueth all his time, even when his wives and hollow-hearted subjects flattered him and enticed him to toleration of idolatry.

But consider further that Solomon, when he is here set forth as the desire, praise, and blessedness of all his people, he is then a type of Christ, greater than Solomon, ver. 2, whose heavenly fellowship and instruction the church desires above wine ; whose graces are excellent, and procuring him love and renown ; of whom the church prayeth to be drawn, and who leadeth us to fellowship with God in holy worship ; whom therefore the people rejoice in, and remember his love above wine ; the upright love him.

*Use 1.* This, first, Doth shew us the happy estate of a church or commonwealth, when men of place labour not for preferments or worldly profits, for honour or long life, but for wise and understanding hearts, that may go in and out before the people in their callings, when they desire to be kissed with the kisses of God's mouth, that he would breathe into them such graces as be needful for their places.

*Use 2.* Secondly, This sheweth what procures a magistrate love and reputation, when, being enriched with God's graces as sweet ointments, he manifesteth the sweet savour thereof in all his administrations. If any man desire a good name, if any man desires love and respect, this is the way to get it : fill your hearts with the good gifts and graces of God ; let God's grace shew forth itself in your speeches, in your answers, in your practices ; this ointment will be stronger to get a good name than any other noisome thing to hinder it. The virgins will love you, for they rejoice at your faith : ' And by faith our elders were well reported of,' Heb. xi. 2. By

these Solomon got a good name all the world over.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, This is to teach a magistrate to draw on the people to holy duties by all means he can : by his proclamations, laws, and examples.

*Use 4.* Fourthly, To shew that the greatest comfort of subjects, and the strongest love to knit them in all hearty affections to their prince, is his forwardness in drawing them on, and leading them an end to the holy duties of God's worship.

'Draw me, and I will run after thee,' ver. 4. If Solomon once be drawn, all the people will come after rejoicing, when they shall see the magistrate come.

*Use 5.* Fifthly, To shew us a sign of a true spouse of Christ. Such a one preferreth fellowship with him above all things, ver. 2, delighting in his company, in his ordinances. Thus did Paul : ' I count all things loss and dross for Christ,' Phil. iii. 7, 8 ; so David, ' Whom have I in heaven but thee?' Ps. lxxiii. 25.

' I am black, yet comely,' &c., ver. 5-9.

In these verses is described the estate of the church.

First, Of Israel and Judah in the last days of Solomon, and then of Rehoboam, ver. 5.

Secondly, Of Judah alone, ver. 6.

Thirdly, Of Israel alone after the apostasy of the ten tribes, ver. 7, 8.

Fourthly, Of Judah alone, in respect of his civil condition under the service of the king of Egypt, ver. 9.

' I am black,' &c., ver. 5. The church is set forth by a double adjunction, the one contrary to the other—' I am black, yet comely'—and both these by comparison :

First, Black as the tents of Kedar.

Secondly, Comely as the curtains or hangings of Solomon.

First, Black by the fall of Solomon, 1 Kings xi. 4, 9.

Secondly, By the folly of Rehoboam, 1 Kings xii. 14, 15.

Thirdly, 1. By profaneness ; 2. By schism ; 3. By apostasy ; 4. By the rebellion of the ten tribes, 1 Kings xii. 16, 18, 19.

' Yet comely.'



First, By the present purity of God's ordinances in the temple, Ps. xlvi. 1, 2 ; 2 Chron. xiii. 10-12.

Secondly, The constancy of the upright in cleaving to God, to the king, to the house of God, and David ; the which was done in profession by whole Judah and Benjamin, and the Israelites inhabiting in the cities of Judah, but in truth by the upright, 1 Kings xii. 17, 20, 23.

'Ye daughters of Jerusalem,' &c. Children of the church are called daughters rather than sons, as being prepared as a pure virgin for Christ their husband, 2 Cor. xi. 2.

'As the tents of Kedar,' &c.,—that is, of the Arabians who were called *Scenith* or Nomade, for that they wandered up and down feeding their flocks, in tents, which they made of goats' hair, a coarse stuff of itself, and being weather-beaten the more homely and black. Hereto the prophet alludeth when he calleth the church of Israel Aholah, Ezek. xxiii. 4 ; and Jerusalem Aholibah, my tent in her, for she was then as the curtains of Solomon.

It was David's grief that he was long conversant in the tents of Kedar, Ps. cxx. 5 ; the church was now like to these tents,

First, In their blackness, which resembled their adversity.

Secondly, In that she now lived among the enemies of her peace, the sons of her mother being angry with her.

Thirdly, In that black and sad defection which laid the foundation of the after captivity, when the church wandered to Babel, her tent being removed as the curtains of Solomon or hangings, having the name from the coupling together. Josephus saith<sup>1</sup> that Solomon's halls were hung with hanging of Babylonian tapestry in their courses or suits, and the wall of marble underneath most curiously wrought with rich imagery ; it seemeth also, each hanging inwardly more rich than other. Such was the estate of the church in time of public defection, pure and richly graced in the upright members, whom the better one inwardly knew, the more gracious they appeared.

'Look not upon me because I am black,' &c., ver. 6.

<sup>1</sup> Flavius Joseph. Ant., ii. 8.

This verse hath two parts :

First, An admonition of the church of Judah to the daughters of Jerusalem not to despise her, nor alienate themselves from her in regard of her blackness, or, as it is in the Hebrew, Because I am she that am black.

Secondly, A rendering a threefold reason :

First, Of her blackness.

Secondly, Of their not despising her for it.

A third reason is,

First, From the highest cause of her affliction :

'The sun hath looked upon me.'

Secondly, From the instrumental cause, the anger of her mother's children against her.

Thirdly, For the meritorious cause, which she acknowledgeth was wholly in herself, her not keeping well her own vineyard, aggravated by the divers degrees, though they made her the keeper of the vineyards.

'Look not upon me,' ver. 6,—that is,

First, With a scorching eye, sunburning me, making me still more black by your disdain and separation, as the sun is said to look upon, that is, with a scorching eye.

Secondly, With a piercing eye, as the vultures do, whereof Job speaketh, Job xxviii. 7, using the same word here used of the sun, which spieth out what he may fasten upon, any corruption or carrion.

'The sun,' ver. 6,—that is, God hath looked upon me with a scorching eye in displeasure, Ps. lxxxiv. 11, for he was angry with Solomon. It came not by chance or civil causes in polity, 1 Kings xi. 9, and xii. 24, but by divine procurement ; and therefore the daughters of Jerusalem do make such a use of it as not to alienate themselves the more from God by it. That which cometh from God should draw us nearer to God ; he did it to set us more kings in the commonwealth, as Solomon had more gods in the church.

'The sons of my mother were angry with me,' ver. 6,—that is, the ten tribes were offended ; yea, this anger of the tribes was excessive, 1 Kings xii. 16, when it brake forth into such extremity, and therefore they rather to be reproved than the church disdained.

'They made me the keeper of the vines.'

First, God, 1 Chron. xxviii. 4-6.

Secondly, All the tribes, 2 Sam. v. 3.

'Of the vines,'—that is, of all the churches, Ps. lxxx. 8; Isa. v. 1; Mat. xxi. 33.

'But mine own vineyard have I not kept,'—that is, not the churches of Judah and Jerusalem, idolatry and superstition creeping in.

No, not the vines of mine own house, my wives, Ps. cxxviii. 3, from falling to idolatry, and seducing myself to toleration of it.

'Tell me, oh thou,' &c., ver. 7. This verse containeth,

First, A prayer of the faithful dispersed throughout the ten tribes, and commanded by Jeroboam to go no more to worship at Jerusalem, but to go to Dan and Bethel, desiring to know whither to resort to find Christ feeding his sheep that hear his voice, John x. 27, 28.

Secondly, A reason to prevent her turning aside to superstitious worship by following such teachers as will not be subordinate to Christ, depending upon his direction, but companions with him, usurping to prescribe with like authority as himself in his worship, 1 Kings xii. 28, 31.

'If you know not,' ver. 8. This verse containeth Christ's answer, where observe,

First, A compellation: 'Oh thou fairest amongst women.'

Secondly, A supposition: 'If thou knowest not;' as if he should say, It is much thou shouldst not know.

Thirdly, A direction to follow in this case,

First, The footsteps of the true sheep of Christ who went up all to Jerusalem, 2 Chron. xi. 13, 14, 16.

Secondly, The tents of the shepherds, the lawful priests, who were there also; there they feed the kids and young ones, 2 Chron. xiii. 10, 11, who else might in time grow rammish and rank with superstitious and bad ministers.

'I have compared thee,' ver. 9. Here the civil estate of the church of Judah is described; for after that the recourse of the faithful priests and Levites had strengthened the hand of Rehoboam, he fell away, 2 Chron. xi. 17, and xii. 1, 2, and most of Israel with him, wherefore God sent Pharaoh Shishak, 2 Chron. xii. 2, 8, 9, (for all the kings of Egypt were called Pharaohs,) to subdue them to his service. So then the church of Judah is here set forth,

First, By her service to Pharaoh, as if, like horses, they drew in Pharaoh's triumphant chariot, 2 Chron. xii. 8. Josephus saith this Shishak was Sesostris, of whom Herodotus speaks; yea, of him saith Diodorus Siculus, that he caused kings as horses to draw in his chariots.

Secondly, By her acceptance to God in this service: 'I have compared thee to the company of my horses;' and so in the Hebrew, because they had submitted themselves under God's just hand, 2 Chron. xii. 6, 12. If Solomon had spoken of any of his wives or concubines, it had been a monstrous and absurd comparison to liken them to coach-horses. Also, because this is a marriage song, he setteth down expressly no dismal thing to interrupt bride-chamber joy, but veileth the service under this magnificent comparison darkly.

*Use 1.* This shews us what it is that makes the church black, wherein the deformity of it stands; in the fall and sins of the people, and of the princes, in declining to idolatry; in their folly, schisms, and rents from their mother; profaneness, apostasy, and rebellion in the church and commonwealth; these do darken the fairest churches.

If Solomon shall set up other gods, God will set up foreign princes in his kingdom; if he and his people will serve other gods, God will cause his princes to draw in foreign princes' chariots; if we be at unity with other gods, God will be at enmity with us.

*Use 2.* Secondly, This doth shew us there may be a true comely church in the midst of such deformities, yet the true church of God in the greatest darkness is always comely. It is not the sins of princes and people that can take away the church's comeliness; they may bring blackness upon her, like to the tents of Kedar, but draw these curtains aside and you shall find that God's church is comely, like to the curtains of Solomon. Run we not therefore from the church because of her blackness, but run to her and embrace her in her most sad defections.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, To teach the children of the church not to separate from the church for corruption sake; not to look only at her corruptions, but to see her comeliness also; and not add affliction to the afflicted; much less are we to think they in

Bohemia, and in the Palatinate, are no churches, for that they are now sunburnt. The Sun, even God, hath looked upon them, and it is not their mother's children, but the bastards of the Roman harlot have been angry with her. Let us not then look at them with a vulture's eye, as though we would behold nothing but corruption and carrion; nor with a scorching eye make them more black; but with a childlike eye to pity them for their calamity and blackness which is befallen them.

*Use 4.* Fourthly, Observe that the calamities of the church spring not out of the dust, but it is God that causeth darkness upon the church; yea, to speak reverently, it is he that looks at her with a scorching eye; he searcheth her sins, and, finding them out, doth blast her, that she is tanned and sunburnt. If then it be God's hand, let us pity the church so much the more, and strive with God to renew the light of his countenance upon her.

*Use 5.* Fifthly, It was a sin in them to be angry with the church, as some of the separation are, and do depart from us; and it is not a little sin and fault in us to despise other churches in distress. What! and if some cast off England, shall we reject it because some of the sons of her mother do so? How much less then when the sons, not of a mother, but of a harlot, hate the church beyond the seas, shall we then reject the church? God forbid!

*Use 6.* Sixthly, This teacheth us concerning Solomon, that,

First, He repented of his fall, acknowledged his being wanting of keeping his own vine; and,

Secondly, He wrote this song after his fall and repentance; else if he had foretold his fall and repentance before it was done, it might seem like the Jesuits' popish repentance, who confess to their priests their sin before they commit it. But he penned it after his fall, to assure us the more of his salvation, which some make doubt of.

*Use 7.* Seventhly, This shews us such souls are the fairest and most beautiful in Christ's eyes, as, not resting in the commandments of governments touching matter of religion, but do seek for the true church and pure worship of God, and follow it, though with neglect of their suburbs and possessions, 2 Chron. xiii. 14, 16. Christ calleth those the fairest among women who here inquire after

him, and sell all to follow him, Mat. xix. 21, 27; Luke xviii. 22, 28; Mark x. 21, 28; so these that want means of salvation at home, are desirous to seek after them, and where they find them, there they go, and part with anything to enjoy the purity of God's worship and ordinances; these in God's account are the worthiest Christians.

*Use 8.* Eighthly, Here is shewed two marks of the true church of God. Do any doubt whether God be God or Baal, and do halt between two opinions, not knowing whether to join with Rome or England? ver. 8. Go then out by the footsteps of the flocks, where the faithful, hearing God's voice, resort, and will not hear any voice but Christ's; follow those. Now times are such, blessed be God, as every one may find out where the church is; but in the case of blackness and darkness, inquire then,

First, For such as will hear no voice but Christ's, and follow then the footsteps of the flock; see where they feed, there join yourselves.

Secondly, Where you find faithful ministers, priests, as Aaron's sons, and Levites anointed with heavenly graces, thither carry your kids, there plant your families, to be fed under such shepherds.

*Use 9.* Lastly, We see here when the church neglects God's service, God gives her up to the service of foreign princes, to draw as horses in Pharaoh's chariots, ver. 9; and yet being humbled for this, God will have mercy on her, and so dispose of it, that her service shall not be base, for God will make them to draw his yoke, though they draw it in the yoke of foreign princes, as Rehoboam and his people did, 2 Chron. xii. 2, 4, 8, 9.

'Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels,' ver. 10. to end. The estate of the church is here described, as it was in the days of Abijam, in these words, 'Thy cheeks are comely with jewels;' and as it was in the days of Asa, both in the same words, and in the words following to the end of ver. 11.

'Thy cheeks;' that is, the outward face of the church, are comely with rows of jewels—that is, with keeping their right place and order and manner of God's own ordinances.

This Abijam proclaimeth himself to all the house of Israel: 'But as for us,' saith he, 'the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him; the priests, which minister unto the Lord, are the sons of Aaron,

and the Levites wait upon their business. And they burn unto the Lord every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table,' 2 Chron. xiii. 10-12.

It was not so with the house of Israel, ver. 8, 9. Though Abijah's heart was not so upright as David's, 1 Kings xv. 3; yet the outward face of the church, her cheeks, as it were, were comely with the orderly keeping and observing the ordinances of God, yea, and comely also was the face of the church looking up to God in distress, which moved him to deliver you from Jeroboam, 2 Chron. xiii. 12, 18.

'Thy neck with chains of gold,' ver. 10. Chains of gold are wholesome laws, binding like chains to keep the worship of God and true religion pure as gold; such laws are called chains. This was done in the days of Asa, Ps. cxlix. 8, when he removed the altars of the strange gods, pulling down the high places, breaking the images, and cutting down the groves, commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and the people willingly submitted themselves to enter into a covenant or law, 2 Chron. xiv. 2-5, and xv. 12-15, that upon pain of death all the people should seek the Lord only.

'We will make thee,' ver. 11. This sheweth the forwardness of the people to join with Asa in reforming religion and adorning the church, as is recorded, 2 Chron. xv. 10, 16.

'Borders of gold,' ver. 11; that is, the borders of the kingdom, pure as gold by cleansing and putting away all the idols out of all quarters of Judah, yea, and of Benjamin also, and mount Ephraim, the very skirts, and frontiers, and borders of the kingdom, 2 Chron. xv. 8.

'Studs of silver,' ver. 11. In works of gold are such eminent knobs as adorn the works with variety of colours, and metal, and workmanship, Prov. xv. 11.

Suchlike eminent works which did adorn Asa's reformation of the church, even to the very borders, were these three:

First, His renewing of the altars of the Lord before the porch, 2 Chron. xv. 8.

Secondly, The deposing of his mother from her regency, for her idolatry's sake, and defacing her idol, 2 Chron. xv. 16.

Thirdly, The consecrating and bringing into God's

house his father's and his own dedicated vessels of gold and silver, 2 Chron. xv. 18.

'While the king sitteth at his table,' ver. 12; that is, while Jehoshaphat sits at rest and peace, refreshing himself at home, God establishing his kingdom in his hand, and giving him riches and honours in abundance, 2 Chron. xvii. 15.

'My spikenard,' ver. 12. An ointment of all others most precious;<sup>1</sup> of all other spices spikenard is of greatest estimation. This the apostle John calleth very costly, wherewith our Saviour Christ was anointed by Mary.

By spikenard is here meant the preaching of the word, which is of all savours the most precious, even the savour of life unto life, 2 Cor. ii. 16.

When Jehoshaphat was established in rest and peace he sent forth the priests and Levites to carry the sweet savour of the word throughout all the cities of Judah, 2 Chron. xvii. 8, 9.

'A bundle of myrrh,' ver. 13. Myrrh is an odoriferous tree, that sweateth out a sweet gum called *stacte*, which is preferred before all others.<sup>2</sup>

This gum is also called from the tree myrrh; his smell is strong and fragrant, and fit to preserve from putrefaction, and it is of much use in embalming, and God himself recounteth it amongst the principal spices, Exod. xxx. 23.

'Between my breasts,' ver. 13. The breasts are those that give milk, the sincere milk of the word, to the church's children, 1 Pet. ii. 2—to wit, the priests and Levites. These, when Jehoshaphat sent forth to give milk to the cities of Judah, he sent with them a company of noblemen, religious princes, who added the more authority to the priests and Levites, and are therefore themselves said to teach in the cities of Judah, 2 Chron. xvii. 7. Thus these princes were as a bundle of myrrh amongst the priests and the Levites, to decide all controversies amongst the people, both in matters concerning God and the king; to preserve the people and one another free from corruption in all matters, whether of religion or civil justice, 2 Chron. xix. 5-12. Yea, and Jehoshaphat himself, representing Christ the church's well-beloved upon earth, he rested in the bosom of the church as a bundle of myrrh, sweet,

<sup>1</sup> Plin., lib. xi. cap. xii.

<sup>2</sup> Plin., lib. xii. cap. 16.

and strongly preserving the people from corruption ; from Beersheba to mount Ephraim he went about, throughout all the people, to bring them back again to the purity of God's worship, 2 Chron. xix. 3, 4.

'As a cluster of camphire,' ver. 14. Camphire is a shrub for smell like unto spikenard, wasting the obstruction of the spleen, and by the very smell of it making men *vegetiores et firmiores*,<sup>1</sup> more lively and more strong ; yea, and available also against the biting of serpents ; such was Christ to his church when the children of Moab and Ammon and mount Seir gathered themselves together against the children of Israel in Engedi, 2 Chron. xx. 12 ; for by the ministry of Jehaziel he made Jehoshaphat and his people,

First, More strong in faith to rest on God and his word, 2 Chron. xx. 14-20.

Secondly, More lively and heartily to praise God ; yea, and he saved them from their enemies, 2 Chron. xx. 21-24, themselves not striking a stroke, though their enemies, the breed of the old serpent, put them before in great fear, ver. 3, 12.

'Behold, thou art fair, my love ; behold, thou art fair,' ver. 15. The doubling of the words expresseth the superlative degree by a usual Hebraism. Fair fair, that is, very fair, which sheweth the estate of the church in Hezekiah's time, who returned and set the priests and Levites in their courses, restored their burnt sacrifices and oblations, sanctified the priests, called all the people to the passover, 2 Chron. xxix., xxx., and xxxi. 1, 2, prayed for their healing, took away all the images, groves, and high places.

'Thou hast doves' eyes,' ver. 15,—that is, chaste, and loathing uncleanness, as Pliny<sup>2</sup> reports the doves to be. Hezekiah loathed even the monuments of idolatry, even the brazen serpent, (though sometimes God's ordinance,) when once the people went a-whoring after it ; so by this means abuses that crept into the church in the days of Joram, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, 2 Kings xviii. 4, are not recorded till they come to be cleansed, lest the joy of the marriage song should be darkened by the mention of so sad occurrences ; whence also it is that the abuses that crept in after the death of Hezekiah, in the days of Manasseh and Ammon, are not men-

tioned till their cleansing came, recorded in the days of Josiah.

'Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant : also our bed is green,' ver. 16. This is the estate of the church in the days of good Josiah, who reformed it to the like estate of purity and beauty as in the days of Hezekiah ; yea, in this he exceeded him, in taking away the high places which Solomon had built for his wives' idols, 2 Kings xxiii. 13, as also some other corruptions of Ahaz, ver. 12 ; and besides, he made all the people to worship the Lord only, and to serve him, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 32, 33.

'Yea, pleasant.' It being more than fair, so young a man to work so great a work of reformation, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 1-7.

'Our bed is green.' The house of God was the temple, the bed in the house were the ordinances of God, wherein God was wont familiarly to embrace his spouse, and she him.

These, in Josiah's time, flourished in greatest purity, 2 Chron. xxxv. 18, so that there was no passover like unto his.

'Our bed is green.' It is an allusion to the spring-time, when the worship of God began to flourish again after a winter-time of miry and dirty pollutions.

'The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters, (or walls, or galleries,) of fir,' ver. 17. These words set out the beauty of the church, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 8, 14, in regard of the repairs of the temple made by Josiah.

Use 1. The use is to observe the several beauties and ornaments of the church, which are,

First, To enjoy each ordinance of God in his rank and place ; it is as if the cheeks or open face of the church were decked with rows of jewels. Jeroboam made priests of the basest of the people, and such defect or corruption of God's ordinances is a blemish conspicuous in the face of the church.

Use 2. Secondly, Good kings ought to put upon their people wholesome laws, and strait binding to the purity of religion and the worship of God ; it is no impeachment to their Christian liberty, as Anabaptists dote, but an ornament to their beauty, making their necks comely as with chains of gold. It was the commandment of Asa, 'Whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to

<sup>1</sup> Plin., lib. xxi. cap. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Plin., lib. x. cap. 34.

death,' 2 Chron. xv. 13; 'And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present to serve, even to serve the Lord their God,' 2 Chron. xxxiv. 33.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, People to be ready to bind themselves by solemn covenant and oath to keep such laws, and to assist their princes in cleansing their uttermost borders and corners of the kingdom from superstition and idolatry; and it is no impeachment of Christian liberty to bow to Christian laws; yea, it is the beauty of a Christian church to wear those chains, those laws, which were made for the good of the church, and it was their profaneness and rebellion that say, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us, Ps. ii. 3.

*Use 4.* Fourthly, Princes to send forth savoury and gracious ministers into all quarters of their dominions, that all their people may taste and feel how sweet the preaching of the word is. This is the ornament of a church, when Christian princes so provide that all places may be furnished with preaching ministers; this is to open a box of spike-nard, that the smell thereof may flow forth, but to leave them relished with the dregs of superstition, this is a blemish.

*Use 5.* Fifthly, To see that the nobles and magistrates countenance priests and Levites, ver. 13, and by their authority to give the free passage to the word, and to prevent disturbances which else might be offered to ministers in their churches, yea, all magistrates to prevent corruptions in matters, whether of religion or civil justice, is as if a bundle of myrrh should lodge in the breasts of the church.

*Use 6.* Sixthly, The Lord Jesus to refresh and strengthen the hearts and spirits of his people in public calamities, and to save them from the malignity and venom thereof; he is then as a cluster of camphire to the church in the vineyards of Engedi, as he was to Jehoshaphat and his people when they knew not what to do, 2 Chron. xx. 12. Christ is an ornament, and encourageth both priest, prophet, and prince, to sing a psalm of thanksgiving, ver. 22. And suppose enemies should be as a cluster in the border of the church, how easy a thing is it for God to strengthen, and be as a cluster of camphire, to

strengthen and encourage them against these biting serpents.

*Use 7.* Seventhly, Not to foster and tolerate inveterate corruptions, though received from worthy ancestors, but to hate all abuses in God's worship, even the very monuments of idolatry, and to take them away, as Hezekiah did the brazen serpent, 2 Kings xviii. 4, and to set each ordinance of God in his place; the church then is very fair, she hath doves' eyes.

*Use 8.* Eighthly, Young princes to begin betimes to lift up their hearts to redress abuses in the church, to imitate the best of their predecessors, yea, and to go beyond them, as Josiah did, and to restore God's worship to her native beauty and integrity. It is a fair, yea, a pleasant thing, to behold this forwardness in any, much more in young princes.

*Use 9.* Ninthly, To enjoy the worship of God, purged from all superstition, idolatry, and from all devices of men; it is as if a bed were green, fresh, flourishing, and fruitful. In such worship Christ delights to reveal and communicate himself familiarly with his people, and loveth not to come into a harlot's bed, decked with the laces of tapestry of Egypt, Prov. vii. 16.

*Use 10.* Tenthly, Suppose the church again and again be laid waste, so that instead of camphire is mass and idolatry, it is an easy thing with God to send a Josiah to root out such superstitions; that though abuses crept into the church for three or four princes' lives, yet God can cleanse and reform her, as he did in Josiah's time. God looks not at the corruptions of his church thereby to loathe her, but to heal her, and thereby to glorify his grace in her recovery, rather than his holiness in the discovery of her pollutions.

The bed is here mentioned in the spring of her flourishing, when it began to wax green, not in the winter season of her dirty pollutions; and before, the chaste eyes of the dove recorded, abhorring uncleanness, not the eyes full of adultery, bringing spiritual pollutions into the church, 2 Pet. ii. 14. When there is any superstitious worship, there it is overspread with winter, but when it is purged, then is the bed green; when God's ordinances are kept pure, there Christ delighteth to be.

*Use 11.* Eleventhly, It is an ornament of the

church to restore her with beams of cedar, and her walls or galleries with fir. Cedar is famous for durability, enduring even to eternity, saith Pliny.<sup>1</sup> Fir is acceptable for his sweetness, and while he groweth, for his height, straightness, and perpetual greenness; Solomon's house or temple was of old a lively type, partly,

First, Of the human body of Christ, the temple of the deity, John ii. 19, 21.

Secondly, Of the mystical body of Christ, Col. ii. 9, his church or congregation, 1 Cor. iii. 16, and vi. 19. Christ's human body never decayeth, and therefore needeth no repairing; his mystical body, the church, if it fall into decay, through corruption of doctrine or worship, it may be most fitly repaired,

First, By laying in the walls of the church such solid and eternal truths of God as may hold up the walls of the building.

Thus Luther restored the church by laying this beam of cedar, the doctrine of free justification by Christ.

Secondly, By setting up such worship and works for the people to walk in as are truly sweet and amiable in God's sight, springing from fresh and green sincerity, growing up to the heavens; these are like galleries of fir, whereas vows of perfection, and works of supererogation, and all other relics and rags of popery, are no better than rotten and moth-eaten wood, fit fuel for the fire.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TEXT.

Ver. 1. *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.*

Ver. 2. *As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.*

Ver. 3. *As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.*

Ver. 4. *He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.*

Ver. 5. *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.*

<sup>1</sup> Plin., lib. xiii. cap. 5, 16, 41.

Ver. 6. *His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.*

Ver. 7. *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.*

Ver. 8. *The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*

Ver. 9. *My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.*

Ver. 10. *My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

Ver. 11. *For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;*

Ver. 12. *The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;*

Ver. 13. *The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

Ver. 14. *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.*

Ver. 15. *Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.*

Ver. 16. *My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.*

Ver. 17. *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel.*

### THE EXPLANATION.

Ver. 1. *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.*

The estate of the church from Josiah's repair of the temple, in the last verse of the last chapter, is described here,

First, Before the captivity, ver. 1, 2, under the last days of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, 2 Kings xxiii. 30, 34, and xxiv. 6, 17.

Secondly, In the captivity:

1. At home, the remnant, ver. 3.

2. Abroad, in Babylon, ver. 4-7.

Thirdly, In the end after the captivity, where is described,

1. Her calling out of captivity, to return and worship in Jerusalem, ver. 8-13.

Secondly, Her estate at Jerusalem till the days of the Maccabees, ver. 14-17.

'I am the rose.' The rose is,

First, Lovely for beauty.

Secondly, Sweet for smell, comforting both heart and brain.

Thirdly, Wholesome for use, and medicinal.

'Of Sharon.' Sharon was a fruitful field lying under Bashan, where the herds were wont to feed, excellent for fatness and fruitfulness, 1 Chron. v. 16, 17, and xxvii. 29; Isa. xxxiii. 9, and xxxv. 2.

'And the lily.' The lily is, first, Fragrant, Mat. vi. 28, 29.

Secondly, Fair, yet of the valleys, where the herds used to feed, as in Sharon, 1 Chron. xxvii. 29.

These words then set forth the church's complaint at that time, as some interpreters of chief worth have conceived it, though the words may as fitly be uttered by Christ himself, to set forth both his own disposition and the church's estate.

The first, He was then the rose of the field, the lily of the valleys, to shew that when the church despised him to converse with her in the temple, and the worship there celebrated, he was now ready to leave his temple, and to be a sanctuary to his church abroad, chap. i. 16, 17; Ezek. ix. 3, x. 4, 9, and xi. 23, 16.

Secondly, Christ is here described according to the estate of the church of that time, which wanted culture, ordering, and dressing, thorns and briars growing up in the church, and not weeded out. The wicked are as thorns and briars, 2 Sam. xxiii. 6; and store of them growing up in the church, Micah vii. 4.

When the church is as a garden enclosed, Cant. iv. 12, then briars and thorns are weeded out; but neither magistrate nor minister did his duty in removing offences in those days; so lilies of the field are taken for lilies neglected, Mat. vi. 28, 29, which neither take care for themselves, nor others take care for them, ver. 2, 3.

Thirdly, As the rose of the field, or lilies of the valleys, or lily amongst the thorns, is continually,

First, Subject to be pricked and rent with thorns.

Secondly, Trodden under foot by the herds of beasts; so the church was then subject,

1. To be vexed with the wicked growing up with her.

2. To be trodden under foot by the beasts of the field, the Babylonians, the Egyptians.

Josiah, how sweet a rose! how fair a lily! yet how untimely trodden down by Necho! 2 Chron. xxxv. 22-24. The other kings were placed, displaced, imprisoned, and the whole kingdom with them, at the pleasure of the Babylonians and Egyptians, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17, and in the end the whole church laid waste by the Babylonians.

Again, Christ is the rose and lily, as being,

First, Sweet with the savour of his graces.

Secondly, Beautiful.

Thirdly, Medicinal.

When the church is corrupt in itself, it is yet fair and sweet in Christ; in him our life is hid in our worst taking, Col. iii. 3, he being white as a lily by the purity of his righteousness, we likewise are white as lilies in him, clothed with his righteousness.

'As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons; I sat me down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste,' ver. 3. A tree, first, Not tall, as the cedar of Lebanon, not strong, as the oaks of Bashan, but a tree of middle stature, implying an inferior magistrate, not so high and mighty as the monarchs of the world, yet such whose shadow yields,

First, Refreshing to a man wandering and fainting in a wild forest.

Secondly, Whose fruit is sweet and comfortable. Such was Christ to his church, dispensing himself in Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar made governor over the remnant of the people that were left in the land, 2 Kings xxv. 22.

First, Under him, as under a shadow, they were fearless and safe, 2 Kings xxv. 23-25; but after he was cut down they were driven from under his shadow, and durst stay no longer in their own country, which was left as a wild forest, ver. 26.

Secondly, They gathered,

First, Much sweet summer fruit, Jer. xl. 10-12.

Secondly, Much good instruction and direction from Jeremiah and Baruch, Jer. xl. 6, and xliii. 6, who both lived with him.

'Wine-cellar,' ver. 4. Heb., House of wine, not so



fitly termed banqueting house, which Solomon expresseth by another name, Eccles. vii. 2. A wine-cellar is a low vault under the ground, dark, cold, raw, and gloomy, yet replenished with vessels of liquor, which refresheth and enlargeth the heart, and openeth the mouth.

This house, to the church, was Babylon, whither God brought his people into captivity, which at first view seemed doleful and heavy, but afterward yielded to them many sweet tastes, yea, deep draughts of God's favour. God's Spirit coming upon men makes them seem as full of new wine, Acts ii. 13; it refresheth and enlargeth the heart, and openeth the mouth,

First, To the praise of God.

Secondly, To the edification of his church. Such a spirit God poured upon Daniel, Ezekiel, Shadrach, and his fellows in the captivity, Dan. i. 19, 20.

'And his banner over me was love.'

Banner :

First, For an ensign of defence to the church.

Secondly, For a flag of defiance to their enemies.

How lovingly and gloriously, as with a banner of love displayed, did God defend the three children, and Daniel himself! Dan. iii. 25, and vi. 22.

How did God offer defiance to idolatry in the three children! Dan. v. 16-18, and vi. 10.

'Stay me with flagons, and comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love,' ver. 5. I, the church, is here faint and sick, and ready to swoon, for desire of further fellowship with Christ, and for her own help desireth,

First, Flagons of wine to stay her.

Secondly, Apples to comfort her, as indeed apples do comfort the heart and stomach, prevents swooning, and restrains poison.<sup>1</sup> Thus Daniel, through abundance of revelations, was faint and sick, and desirous of more clear knowledge of his visions, and of the church's deliverance, and found the angel ready to refresh and strengthen him, Dan. viii. 27, and x. 12, 15, 19. And the other members of the church, feeling such sweet taste of Christ's presence amongst them in the captivity, were, doubtless, earnestly desirous of more full enjoying him perfectly,

First, By the ministry of the prophets, as by flagons of wine.

<sup>1</sup> Fernelius, a physician.

Secondly, By the magistracy of Daniel and his fellows, Dan. ii. 48, 49, whom the king set up for inferior magistrates, as by apples, the fruit of the apple-trees.

'His left hand is under my head, his right hand doth embrace me,' ver. 6.

The words may be either a narration how it is, or a prayer that it may be; so in the original the blessings of God's left hand are riches and glory, and of his right hand length of days or immortality, Prov. iii. 16. Riches and honours God conveyeth to us by the hand of the magistrate, immortality by the hand of ministers.

The church therefore desireth God in her captivity, which thing also God granted, that,

First, Princes should be the lifters up of her head, her nursing fathers and mothers.

Secondly, Prophets and priests might deliver to her the sweet testimonies of Christ's embracing love; this was done by Evil-merodach to Jehoiachin, 2 Kings xxv. 27, 30, and by the ministry of Daniel and Ezekiel, Dan. ii. 48, 49.

The princes allowed them great liberty, the prophets dispensed heavenly and comfortable doctrine, Jer. xxix. 5, 6.

'I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please,' ver. 7. Heb., I adjure you—that is, I cause you to swear by the roes and by the hinds of the field, not by them as the persons thou art to swear by, but by those for whose sake and by whose means they are to take themselves bound as by a solemn oath not to stir up or awake my love—that is, not to provoke Christ to exercise his church by any change of their estate till it shall please himself.

These roes and hinds are wild and fearful creatures, easily and swiftly running away, yet otherwise willing to feed with the sheep; such were then the Gentiles willing to converse with the Jews, and to come towards religion; yet if the estate of the church should have proved more troublesome by any indiscreet or offensive carriage of the Jews, they would soon have started back from fellowship with them. For their sakes therefore the church chargeth her daughters, as by an oath, not to disturb the peace of Babel, not to seek preposterously deliverance from

thence before the time that Christ had appointed, lest it turned to the disturbance of her peace, and to the carrying away such Gentiles as were coming on to be proselytes, Jer. xxix. 4-9.

*Use 1.* This may first let us see, that notwithstanding the reformation of religion, Christ may be pleased rather to live abroad in the fields than at home, where the people would willingly assemble. The house of God was now repaired, and the bed green, ver. 16, 17; and the church invites Christ to come in unto her in it, yet he disposeth himself so as more willing to call her abroad. So we may see that notwithstanding the purity and simplicity of Christ's worship, yet Christ is not bound to any place; if things were never so reformed, yet he might leave us, and go into the wild field. Rome hath long doated on Peter's chair, and Jerusalem might as well have bragged of her privileges as any other place, but Christ leaves them. Never rest we then in any outward estate, for Christ may leave us. The Palatinate hath been as reformed as any church for doctrine, and though they might say their bed was green, and their beams were of cedar, and their rafters of fir, yet God hath left them; for do we think that if God had been there these things had befallem them that now are?

*Use 2.* Secondly, This lets us see that though magistrates and ministers should both neglect their duties in ordering and dressing the church, so that the wicked were tolerated to grow up with them, yet God keeps the spirits of his children sweet and pure, as roses and lilies in the midst of briers and thorns. Be not deceived then, for there may be roses and lilies growing where is nothing but briers and thorns to scratch them. It is not straight no church, when it is there, for Christ can see his church though she be there.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, We may here observe against the separatist, that it is not straight no church that is commingled, as they speak, with notorious wicked ones. The church may be Christ's love, yea, and a fragrant and pure flower in his sight and nostrils, and yet live amongst briers and thorns.

*Use 4.* Fourthly, Observe the state of the church is sometimes exposed to opportunity of treading under foot, no wall nor hedge to fence them; it may lie open,

First, To scratching and rending of thorns.

Secondly, To treading under foot of the wild beasts, Ps. lxxx. 12, 13.

*Use 5.* Fifthly, This serves to direct inferior magistrates how to carry themselves towards the church, to be as apple-trees in a wood, wherein the church travelling may find,

First, Shadow of protection.

Secondly, Sweet fruit of loving mercy.

*Use 6.* Sixthly, We may here see the wonderful power of God and goodness to his church, in turning their house of bondage into a house of wine, in spreading also his banner of love over them in their greatest distresses and dangers. What more doleful times of his church than captivity, when men would think God carries his church into a dungeon, then he carries her into a wine-cellar. This may be a ground of solid comfort to us in our worst takings; for though we be in the greatest extremity, yea, in the deepest dungeon of darkness, God can sustain and uphold us here, and refresh us with many comforts.

*Use 7.* Seventhly, This ought to stir us up to more ardent and longing affections after Christ, so that as we be ready to faint and swoon through earnest affections after more full and familiar fellowship with him. It was Daniel's case, he was sick of love; so let it be with us for want of God's presence, and pray that God would refresh us with his presence, and send good ministers and good magistrates to be as nursing fathers to his church, Isa. xlix. 23.

*Use 8.* Eighthly, This serves to teach, and straitly to charge the children of God, when they enjoy God's presence and favour in the ministry and magistracy sustaining and comforting them, to take heed of disturbing their peace,

1. By any indiscreet; or,

2. Offensive carriage; for it is,

First, A disturbance to Christ himself; he is stirred up and awaked, as it were, before he please.

Secondly, The roes and hinds of the field, young comers on in religion, are soon scared away by dangers and troubles arising against the church; therefore we should be careful and take heed we provoke not any dog to bark, for then they will be gone. Let us therefore walk wisely and inoffensively, that none be discouraged, that Christ, who doth sustain us and refresh us, may dwell with us for ever.

'The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills,' ver. 8, to the end.

In these words are described,

First, The church's deliverance out of captivity; where is laid down,

First, The preparation to the deliverance in the causes of it; which were,

First, The voice of the beloved.

Secondly, The coming of the beloved, and that swiftly:

First, Leaping and skipping.

Secondly, As a young hart or roe, ver. 8, 9.

Thirdly, His besieging Babel and overcoming it, set forth in three actions:

First, Standing behind the wall.

Secondly, Looking out at the windows.

Thirdly, Shewing himself through the lattice, ver. 8, 9.

Secondly, The calling out of captivity.

First, To go out of Babylon into their own country, ver. 10-13; whereunto there are motives:

First, From removal of impediments, ver. 11.

Secondly, From store of opportunities, ver. 12, 13.

Thirdly, To worship God in public meetings in their own country, ver. 14.

Secondly, The state of the church returned into their own country, in regard,

First, Of opposition of enemies, ver. 15, subtle and ravenous, where is set forth,

First, Their nature; they are foxes, little foxes.

Secondly, The harm they do; they spoil the vines.

Thirdly, There take us the foxes.

Secondly, Of their communion with Christ's outward enemies, and inward abuses restrained, partly, more plentiful and entire.

First, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.'

Secondly, 'Feedeth amongst the lilies,' ver. 16.

Secondly, Interrupted, and yet by turns Christ often and speedily visiting and succouring them, and that to the time of the coming of Christ, and the abolishing of the shadows of the ceremonial law, ver. 17.

'The voice of my beloved,' ver. 8. This was the report of Cyrus coming to besiege Babel, and his

mustered together of many nations to that service, which rumour was discerned by the faithful to be the accomplishment of the prophecies given them before of deliverance by Cyrus, Isa. xlv. 28, and xlv. 1. And therefore the church, hearing this rumour, suddenly acknowledgeth in it the promise and voice of Christ, Jer. l. 42, 43, 46; and so it was no less grateful to them than doleful and dreadful to the Babylonians.

'He cometh leaping upon the mountains.'

'My beloved is like a roe, or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the window, shewing himself through the lattice, ver. 9.

These words express the great expedition and speed which Cyrus made in his journey against Babel; all the nations lying in the way,

First, Either of themselves setting open their gates to him, as weary of the Babylonian yoke;

Secondly, Or speedily surprised and subdued.

'He standeth behind the wall.' Laying siege to the walls of Babylon.

'He looketh forth at the windows,'—that is, he giveth some glimpse of hope of further enlargement to the church.

'He sheweth himself through the lattice.' As in the original, any place burned through. In the siege of Babel, Cyrus diverting the course of Euphrates another way, which before came through the midst of the city, burning up the reeds, and drying up the water passages, he shewed himself through the place and entered the city, Jer. xxx. 31, 32.

'My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away,' ver. 10,—that is, Cyrus made open proclamation for my departure out of Babel, and return into mine own country, Ezra ii. 1-4. Though Cyrus was a heathen, and knew not Christ the beloved, yet the church in Cyrus saw the hand and voice of Christ, using Cyrus as an instrument for deliverance, Isa. xlv. 4, 5; whence Ezra saith, 'The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus,' Ezra i. 7.

'For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone,' ver. 11.

That is, first, Partly it was now spring-time of the year; the winter and rain were now over, which else might have hindered travel.

Secondly, The metaphorical winter of Babel's captivity, and all the storms of it, were blown over; whence it is the Chaldean word is here used to signify this winter, not the common Hebrew word.

'The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land,' ver. 12.

Which, with the words following, is,

First, Partly a description of the spring-time, which invited them to this journey.

Secondly, Partly a setting before them of such conveniences which, like to the spring-time, might invite them to this journey.

'The flowers appear on the earth;' that is, even they of the people of the countries amongst whom they sojourned, they both,

First, Praised God for their deliverance, Ps. cxxvi. 1-3.

Secondly, Furnished them with gold and silver, and other useful things, for their journey, Ezra i. 4, 6-8.

'The time of the singing of birds is come.' To wit, that the priests and Levites should now sing and praise God in their own countries, which they thought unseasonable to do in a strange land, Ps. cxxxvii. 3, 4.

'The voice of the turtle is heard in our land;' that is, of Christ the faithful spouse of his church, who is mourning in Judea because he findeth not his mate (the church) there.

'The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell,' ver. 13,—that is, the chief of the fathers and elders of the people, they shew themselves forward to countenance the journey, and to prepare for it.

'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away,' ver. 10, 13. Being twice repeated, it argueth the people were slack to leave their states, which they had planted themselves in at Babel, and therefore stood in need of calling on again and again.

'O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely,' ver. 14.

'O my dove;' that is, my chaste, innocent, and fair spouse.

'That art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the stairs.' That now dost worship me in holes and corners.

'Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice.' Let me see thee assembled into the face of a church in my sanctuary, let me there hear thee calling upon me, singing praise to me, speaking my word.

'For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely.'

First, The voice of the church, at one and the same time,

First, Rejoicing in God's wonderful mercy.

Secondly, Weeping and bemoaning, partly,

First, Their own unworthiness.

Secondly, The decays of the church in regard of former times, Ps. xiv. 6, 1-3, with Jer. l. 4, 5; Ezra iii. 11-13, 15.

'Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes,' ver. 15; that is, restrain the foxes, the little foxes, the enemies of the church, of greater or less power, such as were the Samaritans, Ezra iv. 2-4, and v. iii; Neh. iv. 1-3; Esther iii. 8, 9. These spoiled the vines, hindered the proceeding of the building of the temple, Ezra iv. 4, 5, 23, 24, and the peace of the church. And therefore Tobiah said truly of himself and his fellows, that they, as foxes, going upon the weak foundation of the walls of Jerusalem, might easily demolish the same, Neh. iv. 3. Yet these foxes in the end were taken and restrained, first, Partly by the edict of Darius, Ezra vi. 11, 13; secondly, Partly by the hanging of Haman and his sons, and the destruction of some other of the Jews' enemies, Heb. vii. 10, and ix. 14, 16.

'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' ver. 16. The church enjoyeth familiar and comfortable communion with Christ, these enemies being quelled, Neh. viii.

'She feedeth among the lilies;' that is, among pure and fair Christians, all corruptions being weeded out, both of strange wives, Ezra x., of usury, of right of the Levites' maintenance and ministrations, and profanation of the Sabbath, Neh. xiii.

'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether,' ver. 17.

‘Turn, my beloved ;’ that is, return often to visit and succour me.

‘As a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether ;’ that is, swiftly and speedily, Bether being near to them on the other side Jordan, 2 Sam. ii. 29 ; as who should say, though thou sometime turn from us, yet be not far, but ready ever and anon to return and succour us.

‘Until the day break, and the shadows flee away ;’ that is, till Christ come, and the ceremonial shadows vanish.

*Use 1.* First, This teacheth us that in all the instruments of the church’s deliverance we should see and discern Christ speaking and working in them ; see here the church looks not at Cyrus so much, but at Christ in him. Do they hear a rumour of a deliverance ? Is it the voice of Christ ? and it must needs be a strong voice which Christ is the author of. The wisest Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they say it is Christ, and all the rest yield ; and the church sees Christ come skipping. Doth it see Cyrus about the walls ? She sees Christ there. Doth she see Cyrus shewing himself through the lattice ? She sees Christ there. Doth she see when he is possessed there, and makes proclamation to them to go up again to Jerusalem ? She looks at it as Christ’s voice, saying, ‘Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away,’ ver. 13.

So the Holy Ghost teacheth, what favour any doth shew to the church, it is Christ that doth it ; so take it, that if any good befall the church it is Christ that doth it ; if any lead into captivity, Nebuchadnezzar or any other, it is Christ that leads her into a wine-cellar ; if there be any noise or work of deliverance, it is Christ that comes leaping and skipping ; so in all the calamities, and in all the blessings that befall the church, ascribe all to Christ. The same hand that gave, the same hand hath taken away, Job i. 21, and xlii. 10 ; God turned the captivity of Job, and God turned again the captivity of his people, Ps. xii. 6, 11. This is a wonderful stay to God’s church, and to every member of it ; for man cannot bring it into captivity and bring it out again ; man’s hand cannot bring hard things upon the church, nor bring her out again of them ; for if it were in men’s hands, or in Satan’s, or in our own hands, it would not go well with us ; but being

in Christ’s hands alone, it may be a stay and a comfort.

*Use 2.* Secondly, This teacheth us that when the time of the church’s deliverance is come, Christ will come quickly and speedily for her deliverance, leaping and skipping as a roe or a hart. The winter shall not always remain on the church ; no, not when she deserves a black winter. ‘The patient abiding of the saints shall not always be forgotten,’ Ps. ix. 18. Suppose God leads his church into captivity seven years, yea, seventy years, yet it will not always continue. This may serve to comfort us in the distresses of the church at home or abroad. God will not always punish with reproach or desolation, but the time will come these will be gone and flee away.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, This lets us see the church profiteth by calamities ; she comes out better from them than she went into them ; she entered and went into captivity hating God, defiled with many abominations ; she returns out ‘My love, my fair one.’ The church of God, and the members of it, are more lovely in God’s sight by the hard times that pass over them. When this church had been seventy years in captivity—a hard time it was—yet they lost nothing by it ; they kissed his rod, and sought God, Jer. xii. 7, 8 ; and now he styles them lovely. He loathed them because they loathed him ; they were now tried and purified. Before they were loathsome, but now are lovely ; before hated, but now loved. But see what a blessed use chastisements are of to the church : how loathsome soever we go into captivity, when we defile ourselves with lusts and sins, yet when we have been thoroughly humbled with some crosses, how fair come we out ! ‘My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction,’ Prov. iii. 11. And why doth God say, Deut. viii. 16, he proved them to do them good ? when he saith *my love*, it is more than lovely ; it is love, it is love itself ; and *fair one* is more than fair. So, ‘It is good for me,’ saith David, ‘that I have been afflicted,’ Ps. cxix. 71. So the church before her affliction was loathsome, foul, hated ; but now she is fair and lovely.

‘Thou art fair, O my love.’

*Use 4.* Fourthly, This lets us see the church’s winter. Storms shall not always lie upon her, but

they shall in the end blow over. 'The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous,' Ps. cxxv. 3.

*Use 5.* Fifthly, We may see that outward comforts are easily able to drown in us a longing after God's ordinances. The contentment that some found in captivity made them stand in need of often calling to return to Zion.

*Use 6.* Sixthly, We may learn here that the face of the church is not always visible and conspicuous in the eyes of men, but always in the eyes of God; for they meet under the stairs, and worship God in holes and corners. And a while after Christ saith, Why dost thou lie thus under the stairs and in clefts of rocks? Let me see thy face and hear thy voice. The church of Rome advanceth herself, that she hath always been conspicuous. But this is no true sign of a true church, for the true church is not always conspicuous: though Christ always sees some to meet in corners and holes, yet not always in solemn assemblies. The dove of Christ Jesus sometimes makes her rest in the rocks, and builds under the stairs, where Christ sees her, but not publicly.

*Use 7.* Seventhly, See here the church needs not angels and saints to mediate for her; her own voice is sweet, and countenance comely, in God's estimation, ver. 14. 'At that day ye shall ask in my name; and I say not to you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me,' John xvi. 26, 27. Christ tells us he shall have no great need to pray for us, for God himself loveth us, to hear our voice, and to see us. Let us then not be afraid to put forth our voices. Labour then for such a spirit as to grieve for our sins, and to rejoice in God's mercies, for God is pleased with that. He is a true citizen of Zion, that when he abounds in God's mercies, yet he weeps for his sins; and when he weeps for his sins, yet he is thankful for God's mercies.

*Use 8.* Again, observe, the church shall always be troubled with some enemies: 'Take us the foxes that spoil the vines,' ver. 16. There shall be ever some Sanballat, or Tobiah, or some other, to be nibbling at the church of God. Wonder not at this, for this will be so. But observe, touching these enemies of the church,

First, They shall deal subtly and craftily with her.

Secondly, They may disturb and hinder her peace and proceedings. But,

Thirdly, They shall in the end be restrained, as in Rev. xix. 20, 'And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, &c. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.' Therefore let such foxes know the time will come when Christ will either take them, and chain them and bind them up, as he did Sanballat, Tobiah, Shethar-boznai, Ezra vi. 6, 7, or else hang them up, as he did Haman and his sons. Let men then take heed that they do not push at the church, for God will either chain them up, or hang them out of the way.

*Use 9.* Lastly, Here we may see, when the enemies of the church are restrained or destroyed, and corruptions weeded out of it, the church then enjoyeth sweet, and safe, and full fellowship with the Lord Jesus, and he with her. He gives her pledges of his favour, and she gives him pledges of pure worshipping him. He feeds them with his ordinances, they him with their sacrifices. And they that would procure Christ this, let them provide for weeding out of their sins, as usury, wicked marriages, profanations of God's sabbaths, &c. Such churches shall be sweet, and much sweet solace shall they enjoy one with another, Christ with them, and they with him.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE TEXT.

Ver. 1. *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.*

Ver. 2. *I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.*

Ver. 3. *The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?*

Ver. 4. *It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth. I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.*

Ver. 5. *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.*

Ver. 6. *Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant ?*

Ver. 7. *Behold his bed, which is Solomon's: three-score valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.*

Ver. 8. *They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.*

Ver. 9. *King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.*

Ver. 10. *He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.*

Ver. 11. *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.*

THE EXPLANATION.

Ver. 1. *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not, &c.*

This chapter setteth forth the estate of the church from after the days of Nehemiah to the time of Christ's sojourning here on earth in a twofold period:

First, Under the Maccabees, ver. 1-6.

Secondly, In John Baptist's time, ver. 6-11.

The state of the church in the Maccabees' time was partly full of calamities, as a time of darkness: 'By night I sought him,' ver. 1; and partly sweetened with some more comfortable issue.

This calamity is set forth,

First, By resemblance to night: 'By night I sought him.'

Secondly, By the absence of Christ, whom she sought in vain, ver. 2.

First, In her bed, ver. 1.

Secondly, In the streets of the city, ver. 2.

Thirdly, Amongst the watchmen, ver. 3.

The comfortable issue of her seeking Christ is set forth,

First, By her finding of him, ver. 4.

Secondly, By her holding of him, ver. 4.

Thirdly, By her bringing of him into her mother's house, ver. 4.

Fourthly, By her charge to the daughters of Jerusalem, to walk circumspectly, that this estate be not interrupted, ver. 5.

'By night,' ver. 1; that is, in time of darkness and public calamity, when Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn, waxed exceeding great, wasted the pleasant land, cast some of the host and stars of heaven to the ground; when he took away the daily sacrifice, and trode down the sanctuary, and cast down the truth to the ground, Dan. viii. 9-12; when he robbed the temple, murdered the people, spoiled the city, made laws for profaning the Sabbath, for offering swine's flesh, for neglecting circumcision; when he set up the statues of Jupiter Olympus, the abomination of desolation, in the holy place; when he burnt the books of the law, and made it death to have a Testament; when he brake down the altar and set up another; when he put women to death who had caused children to be circumcised, and hanged children upon the necks of their mothers, 1 Maccab. i. 23, to the end.

'In my bed.' Not in my bed of ease and sloth, as some take it, for what ease could the church take in the night-time of calamity? But in my bed, chap. i. 16, and iii. 7, that is, in the place and duties of God's worship, the temple and the ordinances.

'I sought him whom my soul loveth;' I desired and endeavoured to have fellowship with Christ; 'but I found him not,' the sanctuary being polluted, and the daily sacrifice taken away, and profane idols set up in the place.

'In the streets of the city,' ver. 2; that is, in the open assemblies of the faithful, in the synagogues, in the cities of Judea and Jerusalem; but behold there altars erected to idols, and incense burned, and the books of the law cast into the fire, 1 Maccab. i. 57-59; yea, behold the citizens of Jerusalem all fled and gone, 1 Maccab. i. 40; and the rest went in procession to Bacchus, 2 Maccab. vi. 7.

'The watchmen that go about the city,' ver. 3—to wit, the Levites, who answered her with silence; but a little after she found succour at Modin, for the priests, Mattathias and his sons, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon, and the rest that went about to repair the ruins of the church and commonwealth, to these

the faithful church repairing, and finding deliverance and comfort, 1 Maccab. ii. 42, 43, by Judas especially, or rather by Christ in him, 1 Maccab. iii. 5-8, she left him not till she had brought him into the temple, where she soon after cleansed the sanctuary, and restored the purity of God's worship, and offered sacrifice according to the law, so that she found great comfort and joy in the duties of God's worship, 1 Maccab. iv. 42, 46. Thus again found they Christ in a typical saviour, held him by faith, and, with courage and zeal, brought him into the temple and sanctuary, the house and chamber of her mother,—that is, of the former church of Israel, or of the Catholic church, for the church of the former ages is the mother of the latter; or the whole church is the mother of each part, in usual phrase of Hebrew speech. The temple is the house of both; the sanctuary is the chamber of her that bare her.

'I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please, ver. 5.

'I charge you,' &c. See the same words opened, chap. ii. 7. The church chargeth all her daughters, all her members, to take heed, lest by their indiscreet dealing, or any wicked practice, they stir up the neighbour princes of Syria and Egypt, not to disturb the peace of the church, and to provoke Christ again to leave them desolate; which, though Jason and Menelaus and Alcimus broke, 2 Maccab. xiv. 14, yet they prevailed not so far, but Christ was still found in the temple of the faithful till his coming in the flesh.

'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?' ver. 6.

'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?' This is a description of John Baptist, and of the church gathered by his ministry in the wilderness; which is set forth,

First, By the admiration and inquisitiveness of the old synagogue after him and his baptism: 'Who is this that cometh,' or ariseth, &c., which was fulfilled, John i. 19; Luke iii. 15; to whom the Jews sent priests and Levites to ask him, Who art thou? and all men mused whether he were not the Christ.

Secondly, By the place of his arising, and the

church with him: in the wilderness, Luke iii. 2-4; Mark i. 3, 4.

Thirdly, By the manner of arising: like pillars of smoke, which,

First, Ariseth from fire, as the church arose from zeal and fervency of John's ministry.

Secondly, Ascendeth on high, as the propagation of this church did, even to Jerusalem, Mat. iii. 5, 6.

Thirdly, Fills the country, as the church did, with rumour and increase of it, Mat. iii. 5, 6.

Fourthly, By the excellent fragranciness and sweetness of the graces thereof perfumed, chap. i. 13, preserving from putrefaction. Such was the powerful zeal of John and his ministry, strongly fragrant as myrrh, and preserving his hearers from Phariasaical hypocrisy, Mat. iii. 7-10. Frankincense is of like strong fragranciness, and of chief use in making of the holy incense, Exod. xxx. 34; by which prayer was signified, Ps. cxli. 2, to intimate the fragranciness and fervency of his prayers who taught all his disciples to pray, Luke xi. 1.

'With all powders of the merchant;' to wit, perfumed with the sweet graces of God, filled with the Holy Ghost above all prophets, Luke i. 15, yea, above all that were born of women, Mat. xi. 9-11; whence also he seasoned all sorts of his hearers with graces and directions fit for their several callings, Luke iii. 10-14.

Fifthly, By the doctrine of John, who expressly preached the Lord Jesus manifested in the flesh.

'Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel,' ver. 7.

'Behold his bed, which is Solomon's.' This doctrine the church of that time received and believed. In which doctrine that first church first discerned and believed,

First, The temple of Christ's body; for the bed was taken, chap. i. 16, and iii. 1, as also it is here, for the temple, which was the type of Christ's body, John ii. 19, 20.

Now this, as John pointed, John i. 29, 30, 'Behold the Lamb of God,' as here it is said, 'Behold his bed.' This temple it is the temple of Solomon, of Christ; in him the Godhead dwelleth bodily, Col. ii. 9.

Secondly, The guard of angels attending it, to



prevent the fear of Herod's enmity and others, John i. 51; Mat. ii. 13-19.

Thirdly, The maker of his humanity, ver. 9. King Solomon made himself a couch; the word may be translated coach or couch. This latter I rather take, partly for the etymology of Apirion, fol. 38, to be fruitful as the bride's bed is, and partly for agreement with the former word bed, ver. 7.

No earthly father, but Christ by his own Spirit, made his own body and his own bed in his mother's womb, Luke i. 35.

Fourthly, The matter of it: the wood of Lebanon; for the Virgin Mary dwelt in Nazareth of Galilee, at the foot of Lebanon.

As Solomon's temple, the type of Christ's body, was made of the wood of Lebanon, the cedar which is free from corruption, Hosea i., so was the body of Christ sound from seeing corruption, Ps. xvi. 10.

Fifthly, The ornaments of it; which were,

First, Partly his offices:

1. Priestly, as pillars of silver abiding the fire of God's wrath, and pure as silver tried in the fire, Heb. vii. 26.

2. Prophetical, delivering us a word precious as gold, even as fine gold, Ps. xix. 10.

3. Kingly, whence it is said, ver. 10, 'The covering of it of purple, the royal ornament of kings.'

Secondly, Partly the affection wherein he undertook and executed these offices: love of the daughters of Jerusalem, ver. 10. All these John declareth, John iii. 29, to the end.

Secondly, He exhorteth and stirreth up the faithful to behold,

First, Christ, John i. 29, to end.

Secondly, The ornaments wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, ver. 11. The day of his espousals was the day when God the Father contracted him with the church, Mat. iii. 13; whence after he is called the bridegroom, John iii. 29, and John the bridegroom's friend, his disciples the children of the bride-chamber. And the church henceforward in this book is called the spouse, not before. The crown wherewith his mother crowned him is the testimony of Christ's sovereignty, which John and the faithful gave him, John i. 33-35, 49, and iii. 29-36.

First, Of the estate of the church under the Maccabees.

*Use 1.* First, This doth teach us with what intent we are to come before God in the public assemblies, namely, to seek Christ, the love of our souls; not to shew our fine garments, want only to gaze at beauties; not to satisfy the law or friends for fashion's sake, but to seek Christ, instructing us in temptations. Some come to catch something from Christ to entrap him, &c., but it is our duty to come unto him, as a spouse to her husband, for seed. So we must come to Christ that he may cast the seeds of grace into our souls, that we may bring forth fruit unto him.

*Use 2.* Secondly, This lets us see the changeable estate of the church; she that rejoiced in the presence and fellowship of Christ, and could say, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' chap. ii. 16, now seeks him everywhere, and with much difficulty and anguish, ver. 1-3. And so it is oft with every true member of the church, as we may see it was with David, Ps. cxix. 25, and 6-8; so it is now with our brethren beyond the seas, whom you might have commended a year or two ago, and have found Christ there. But now he is gone; she seeks him, but finds him not. See the church of God sometime enjoys all the ordinances of God, sometimes none; so a Christian soul sometimes hath Christ's left hand under her head, and his right hand to embrace her, Cant. ii. 6, soon after she finds him not so. We must not condemn the church for this; for they that are tenderly beloved of Christ may sometimes seek him, and not find him.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, This may comfort such as seek Christ in all his ordinances: they shall either find him in them, or, after the use of them, in some unexpected or extraordinary help. The church here that found not Christ in the temple, nor in the assemblies and recourse of Christian people, nor in conference with the priests, found him soon after in an unexpected and extraordinary help, even Judas Maccabeus, ver. 4; for indeed it was extraordinary for the tribe of Levi to take up the sword and sceptre, which indeed belonged to Judah: so you see, when ordinary means fail, God will be found in extraordinary. Whosoever then would find Christ, and seek him everywhere, they shall surely find him, either in his ordinances or out of them.

*Use 4.* Fourthly, This lets us see the affectionate cleaving of such to Christ, as have long sought him and not found him till at last ; such lay hold on him, and will not let him go, ver. 4, which is one reason why Christ sometimes hides himself from us, that we might seek him the more diligently, and, having found him, cleave to him more steadfastly ; and this God looks for at the hands of his.

*Use 5.* Fifthly, This doth exhort Christians that live among bad neighbours to walk the more circumspectly, as the daughters of Jerusalem are here charged upon oath to do, ver. 5, being between the Syrians and Egyptians. It is a charge given by the church to her daughters to take heed they stir not up her love, nor awake Christ till he please.

Two reasons are given for it :

First, It may provoke Christ to bring another estate upon the church which will not be good for it.

Secondly, In regard of fearful Christians, for they will start away. Many are willing to come into the church, but if the profession of Christ be troublesome and hot, they will not abide it ; therefore this charge is needful that we may walk holily, that Christ be not stirred up, nor these fearful Christians discouraged. See this handled, chap. ii. ver. 7.

Thus far the first part in the time of the Macca-bees. Now,

Secondly, Of the estate of the church in John Baptist's time.

*Use 1.* This is, first, To shew us that God can raise up a church even in the wilderness, ver. 6, to the admiration of observers ; and so he can raise up our neighbour churches, now brought to a wilderness. This may comfort us in regard of them ; for though they be now desolate, yet we may hope a time will come when they shall rise again.

*Use 2.* Secondly, See here is a part of the duty of ancient Christians, not to malign the graces of God in those that come after them, but to admire them. 'Who is it that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,' &c., ver. 6.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, This shews what gifts and graces are most requisite in a minister, and do most adorn him, even zeal in his ministry and fervency in prayer, and all sorts of sweet graces to season and direct all

sorts of his people in their several callings, ver. 6, as John did, when the people came and said, 'What shall we do ? He answered and said, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none,' &c., Luke iii. 10-14. So John was perfumed with graces for all men ; for men must not come into the ministry with judgment and learning alone, for these may come from nature ; but they must come perfumed with graces, to keep themselves and others from putrefaction ; yea, they must labour for those graces which will give a strong scent to save themselves and others.

*Use 4.* Fourthly, This shews us the manhood and godhead of Christ. Christ's human nature is the temple or bed wherein the Godhead resteth bodily ; and the Godhead made this temple or bed for himself, no earthly father for him, ver. 7, 9.

*Use 5.* Fifthly, See here the protection and guardiance the angels give to Christ, and in him to the church and all his members, ver. 7, 8 ; Ps. xci. 11, 12, and xxxiv. 7 ; 2 Kings vi. 16, 17 ; Heb. i. 14 ; Rev. v. 11, and vii. 11.

*Use 6.* Sixthly, We may here see in Christ whatsoever is behoveful for all our salvations. In regard of his priestly office, he is pure as silver, to cleanse our impurity, and to abide the fire. In regard of his prophetic office, he is precious as gold, to enrich our poverty. In regard of his royal and kingly office, he is glorious as purple, and clothed with it, to advance our baseness, ver. 10. His heart or midst is even paved with love of us. His heart is a hearth, for so the word signifieth, whereon the fire of his love towards us burneth continually. Let us then love the Lord Jesus again, and receive the seeds and fruits of his grace, and then shall we see his heart flaming with love to us ; and then whatsoever befalls, bloodshed, war, captivity, &c., all comes from love ; his whole heart is paved with love.

*Use 7.* Seventhly, Let us take up our thoughts and meditations about Christ ; let us go forth and behold him ; let his abundant graces fill our empty souls.

*Use 8.* Eighthly, If thou beest a daughter of Zion, thou art contracted to Christ, and know it by this : Dost thou read his letters ? art thou delighted with them ? and dost thou rejoice to speak to him again by prayer ? If thou dost, it may be the joy of thy heart, for thy estate is good.

Usc 9. Lastly, This doth exhort us all to give up ourselves as spouses to Christ, and that with all gladness of heart, since he is affected to us, who yet hath nothing from us but debts and beggary; and they that do give themselves up to Christ need not fear wanting comfort, for no spouses shall find such comfort as they. Shall he be glad to have us, a company of beggars—yea, as I may say, a company of deaths? And was it the gladness of his heart to be espoused to us, which was when his Father contracted him to us, and shall we think it a day of deading to set our feet into Christ's bed? All the merchants cannot set forth our excellency when he shall pay all our debts, and adorn us with all his graces. Therefore let us go forth, and bring him home to us; we shall then find him comfortable to us in the day of espousals.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TEXT.

Ver. 1. *Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.*

Ver. 2. *Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.*

Ver. 3. *Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks.*

Ver. 4. *Thy neck is like to the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.*

Ver. 5. *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.*

Ver. 6. *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountains of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.*

Ver. 7. *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.*

Ver. 8. *Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amanah, from the top of Shevir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.*

Ver. 9. *Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my*

*spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.*

Ver. 10. *How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse; how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thy ointments than all spices!*

Ver. 11. *Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.*

Ver. 12. *A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.*

Ver. 13. *Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,*

Ver. 14. *Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:*

Ver. 15. *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*

Ver. 16. *Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.*

### THE EXPLANATION.

Ver. 1-6. *Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead, &c.*

This chapter describes the estate of the church in her periods:

First, In Christ's time, under his ministry, ver. 1-6. Secondly, After his ascension, under the apostles, ver. 7-11.

Thirdly, After their departure, during the first ten persecutions, ver. 12-16.

The church in Christ's time is commended and described,

First, By her beauty in general: 'Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair.'

Secondly, The beauty of her several parts, at that time most conspicuous; as,

First, Of her eyes, ver. 1.

Secondly, Of her hair, ver. 1.

Thirdly, Of her teeth, ver. 2.

Fourthly, Of her lips, ver. 3.

Fifthly, Of her temples, ver. 3.

Sixthly, Of her neck, ver. 4.

Seventhly, Of her breasts, ver. 5.

Secondly, The death of Christ falling out in her time, ver. 6.

‘Behold, thou art fair.’ Fair twice repeated implies, by a usual Hebraism, that she was very fair; and beloved twice repeated argues her eminent beauty was very conspicuous. Such was the estate of the church gathered by his ministry and flocking after him.

First, It was fair and beautiful, partly in her flocking after him, Mat. iv. 25.

Secondly, Leaving all to follow him, hanging upon his mouth, and wondering at the gracious words and deeds coming from him, Mat. xix. 19, 27; Luke xix. 48, and ix. 43.

Secondly, In his both,

First, Presence with her, as her light, John iii. 29, and xii. 35.

Secondly, Decking of her by his ministry.

This beauty of the church was well known, yet ought to have been better observed:

First of all, By the children of wisdom, Mat. xi. 10.

Secondly, Of all the Greeks, John xii. 20, 21, even strangers of the pharisees and elders, John xii. 19.

‘Thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks.’ Doves, as before, chap. i. 15, are noted,

First, For their chasteness.

Secondly, Loathing of uncleanness; but there is withal in their eyes,

1. Cleanness.

2. Simplicity.

This implies that the church at that time,

First, Saw more clearly sundry truths about Christ than the fathers had done, Luke x. 23–25, or the present governors, John ix. 39.

Secondly, Was of a simple and innocent look and demeanour, Mat. x. 16; John i. 47.

Thirdly, Looked with a chaste eye after Christ alone, John vi. 68.

Fourthly, Loathed the uncleanness of pharisaical superstitions, Mat. xv. 1, 2.

‘Within thy locks.’ For their knowledge, though clear in many things, yet perceived not sundry plain points; as,

First, The death and resurrection of Christ, Luke xviii. 32–34.

Secondly, The leaven of the pharisees, Mat. viii. 15; Luke xii. 1; Mat. xvi. 6.

As the eye within locks of hair is hindered from discerning things lying open before it.

‘Thy hair as a flock of goats that appear from mount Gilead.’

Hair, though it hang long upon the head, yet it may in time either,

First, Fall of itself.

Secondly, Be cut off. So were the common Christians of that time, as it were, hair,

1. For multitude.

2. Hanging on Christ, the head.

3. Falling many of them from him:

First, Either of themselves, John vi. 66; or,

Secondly, Cut off by the practices of the priests, Mat. xxvii. 20; John xii. 42, 43. Hence it was that Jesus durst not commit himself to them, John ii. 23–25.

‘As a flock of goats.’ Which are wont,

First, To assemble themselves in companies. So did the people gather after Christ.

Secondly, To be without a shepherd, as this people were, Mat. ix. 36.

Thirdly, To feed afar off, and that somewhat dangerously, upon rocks.

So the people came from far to hear Christ, Mark viii. 3, and were in danger for feeding on him, John ix. 22.

‘Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them,’ ver. 2.

The sheep whereto these teeth are likened are set forth,

First, By their even-shornness.

Secondly, By their cleanness, coming up from the washing.

Thirdly, By their fruitfulness: every one bringeth forth twins, none barren.

First, Even set, none gaping out.

Secondly, White and clean.

Thirdly, Each answering to his fellow in the other jaw; none wanting, as it is a praise to the teeth to be. The teeth are such as chew the meat, and prepare it for the rest of the body. Such in that church were the apostles, whom our Saviour calls a little flock, Luke xii. 32. They were all,

First, Even set, and even shorn, none bursting

out beyond his fellows. Peter's supremacy stretched not beyond the rest of the apostles, Mat. xvi. 19, compared with John xx. 23; Mat. xviii. 18, and xx. 20, 25; Mark x. 40, 42; Luke xxii. 24, 25.

The teeth of innocent sheep are even set. They that have tusks longer than the other teeth are hurtful and ravenous beasts, as dogs, bears, lions, &c. Ten of the apostles disdained the motion of supremacy.

Secondly, Came up from John's baptism; and therefore, when Judas fell away, they must needs supply his place out of the number of such as had continued with them from John's baptism, Acts i. 21, 22.

Secondly, They were suitable each one to his fellow, and therefore the seventy were sent out by couples, Luke x. 1.

But especially they were fruitful in bringing home many lambs to Christ, and hence the seventy returned with joy to Christ, Luke x. 17, 18; and Satan is said to fall down from heaven before them like lightning.

'Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks,' ver. 3.

'Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely.' Both signifying the deliverance or utterance of the doctrine of the church at that time, which was,

First, As a thread, slender, (*tenui filo*.) not plump or swelling with human eloquence, but savouring of fisher-like tenuity and simplicity.

Secondly, As a thread of scarlet; for as scarlet or purple is a princely and royal wear, so their doctrine was,

First, Touching the kingdom of heaven, Mat. x. 7.

Secondly, Though tender, yet deeply dyed in grain with royal majesty and authority of the Spirit of God.

'Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks.' Temples of the head are they by which the whole body watcheth or resteth; they are such, therefore, as watch over the body, and for it. The pomegranate was of much use in the old tabernacle and temple. Aaron's coat was hanged with pomegranates and bells, Exod. xxviii. 34—bells for sound of doctrine and prayer, pomegranates for re-

straining and healing the distempers and diseases of the people. Pomegranates are commended by Fernelius,<sup>1</sup>

First, For repressing the heat of choler.

2. The malignity, rottenness, and acrimony of fevers.

3. The looseness of the belly.

Secondly, For comforting and strengthening the stomach and bowels, to the keeping back all fainting.<sup>2</sup> This office the ecclesiastical governors of the church do perform to it. They repress the heat of fallings out among brethren, the notorious abuses, the looseness or distemperdness of the people; they comfort the feeble and bind up the weak, and are therefore fitly resembled by pomegranates, yea, by a piece of a pomegranate, for it is not the whole body of the pomegranate that doth this, but it, broken in pieces, by his juice and rind is medicinable.

'Within thy locks.' Because though Christ established discipline, and delivered it to the church in his time, Mat. xviii. 15–17, yet it was not displayed, nor shewed itself in open execution, till after his resurrection, 1 Cor. v. 1–6.

'Thy neck is like the tower of David,' &c., ver. 4. The neck is that part that joineth head and body together; now that which joineth Christ and his church together is our faith: which faith in some of the members of that church in Christ's time was observed to be strong and great, Mat. viii. 10, and xv. 28; and therefore is here fitly compared to the tower of David, for an armoury, whereof we read, Neh. ix. 25, 26, 'whereon there hanged a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.' It seems David's mighty men hanged up their shields in this armoury against times of war; and so in like manner all the worthies of Israel, all the faithful before Christ, hanged their shields of faith upon Christ, in whom the faith of his church was as a strong armoury, Heb. xi. 13. Faith is not so much a tower of strength in itself, as in Christ, whom it apprehendeth.

'Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies, ver. 5.

'Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.' The breasts give milk: now the breasts

<sup>1</sup> Fernelius, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Fernel. Method. Medend., lib. v. cap. 3.

that give milk to the church, the sincere milk of the word, 2 Pet. ii. 2, are the ministers, which in the church of Christ's time were first the apostles; secondly, the seventy; and are therefore here called two breasts, and both as roes, because not tied to any certain place within all the people of the Jews; for roes stay not long in a place. And both as twins, because of equal commission, being both sent alike to the whole house of Israel, though, after the resurrection, the apostles' commission was enlarged further than that of the seventy.

'Which feed among the lilies.' For they were sent not only among the Gentiles or Samaritans, but amongst,

First, The lost sheep of the house of Israel, Mat. x.

Secondly, The true-hearted or well-affected of the Israelites, Mat. x. 11.

These faithful are here compared to the lilies,

First, For their whiteness and purity of innocency.

Secondly, For their amiableness.

'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountains of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense,' ver. 6.

'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away;' that is, until the light of the gospel break forth, and the shadows of the Mosaical ceremonies vanish.

'I will get me to the mountains of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense;' that is, to the mounts,

First, Of Olivet; secondly, Of Golgotha, where he suffered in the garden and on the cross, and nailed to his cross all the shadows of the law, and, in fulfilling them, abolished them, Col. ii. 14.

Myrrh and frankincense are wont to be used in embalming, and with suchlike Christ himself at his death was to have been embalmed, if his resurrection had not prevented the women, John xix. 39, 40; Luke xxiii. 46. Besides, the passion of Christ was a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour to God, and therefore the place thereof is fitly called the mountain of myrrh, and hill of frankincense; though otherwise the mountain of myrrh may well be mount Calvary, or Golgotha, the place of his death; and the hill of frankincense mount Olivet, in regard of his ascension into heaven; yea, even heaven itself, whither he ascended, may be well called the hill of frankincense for sweetness.

*Use 1.* This, first, doth teach us that a church may be beautiful in God's sight, though consisting,

First, Of mean persons,

Secondly, Of such as were sometimes notorious offenders, as publicans and harlots: and from hence,

First, Poor people,

Secondly, Sinners, yea, ugly sinners, are to be exhorted to repentance and seeking after Christ: it makes them truly amiable in Christ's eyes, though otherwise in themselves never so mean and foul.

From hence also poor sinners may take comfort; though loaden with the sense of their deformities, they in Christ's eyes are very beautiful.

From hence also the Separatists may learn that, notwithstanding many abuses in their teachers, or others of the church, as the scribes and pharisees, whom the people were to hear, Mat. xxiii. 23, yet the church may be denominated from the better part very fair, as a heap of wheat, though covered over with abundance of chaff.

*Use 2.* Secondly, This may teach ministers how to frame themselves to be amiable in God's sight, viz.:

First, By carrying themselves evenly with their brethren.

Secondly, By cleansing their hearts and lives by the power of baptism.

Thirdly, By fruitfulness, and faithfulness in their ministry.

Fourthly, By not affecting carnal eloquence, but gracious and deep-dyed powerful utterance; for swelling words of human wisdom make men's preaching seem to Christ, as it were, a blubber-lipped ministry.

Fifthly, By restraining abuses and offences amongst the people, and strengthening and comforting the feeble-minded.

Sixthly, By feeding their people with sincere milk, 1 Pet. ii. 2, and not being dry nurses.

Seventhly, By taking most delight in conversing among lilies, their well-affected people, though seeking also to win all, and therefore sometimes conversing with them as the physicians among the sick.

*Use 3.* This may teach ecclesiastical governors their office in the former virtues of the pomegranate, ver. 3, to repress the heat of abuses, the looseness and distemperedness of the people, to comfort the feeble, and bind up the weak, &c.

Fourthly, This may teach the people how to improve themselves to Christ, in looking after Christ in knowledge, simplicity, chastity of spirit, loathing superstitions, and places of bad resort.

*Aspicis ut veniunt ad candida tecta Columbæ.*

Thou seest how pigeons take their flight,  
To houses that be fair and white.

For what should Christians do in filthy taverns, ale-houses, stews, &c. ? in strength of faith rooting and building themselves upon Christ.

'Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee,' ver. 7-11. In these words we have a description of the estate of the church soon after Christ's ascension, gathered and built up by the ministry of the apostles, which they call the apostolic or primitive church.

This church is here set forth,

First, By her complete beauty, her full fairness, ver. 7.

Secondly, By Christ's calling her to behold the calling of the Gentiles, ver. 8.

Thirdly, By the ravishing beauty of a sister church at that time :

1. In one of her eyes, ver. 9 ; 2. One chain of her neck, ver. 9.

Fourthly, By her love, which is set forth,

1. By the fairness of it, ver. 10 ; 2. By the sweetness of it above wine, ver. 10.

Fifthly, By the flowingness, sweetness, and wholesomeness of her doctrine, ver. 11.

Sixthly, By the smell of her garments, like that of Lebanon, ver. 11.

'Thou art fair.' The fairness of the church was acknowledged before, but never till now the perfect fairness. All complete fairness or beauty standeth in these three things :

First, In the integrity of all the parts and members of the body ; for if any be wanting, it is a maimed, a blemished body.

Secondly, In the symmetry or fit proportion of all the members one to another.

Thirdly, In the good complexion or colour of them all. Look what parts are requisite for the complete integrity of a fair church ; they are all found in the apostolic church, in comely proportion of beauty ; for look,

First, At their doctrine, and it was,

1. Free from all error, so far as it was dispensed by the apostles, prophets, evangelists of that time, Acts xxviii. 22, 23, who likewise suffered no weeds of false doctrine to grow under them, Rev. ii. 2.

2. Their doctrine was complete, even the whole counsel of God, Acts xx. 27.

3. It was dispensed in powerful simplicity, 1 Cor. ii. 4 ; Acts ii. 37, 44, and iv. 4.

Secondly, Look at their worship, and you may see,

1. The purity of God's ordinances, without mixture of human inventions, 1 Cor. xi. 23, 34, and xiv. 26, 48.

2. Order, decency, edification of all aimed at in all the duties administered.

3. Fervency and frequency in prayer and fasting, Acts iv. 31, xiii. 1-3, and xiv. 23.

Thirdly, Look at their Christian communion, and you may see,

1. Their unity one with another, Acts iv. 32.

2. Love and large-heartedness one towards another, Acts iv. 32, especially to their ministers, Gal. iv. 14, 15.

Fourthly, Look to their discipline, and you may see the apostles, prophets, evangelists, presbyters, pastors, teachers, first, Teaching ; secondly, Exhorting ; thirdly, Ruling : and all by, first, Preaching ; secondly, Writing ; thirdly, Private conference ; fourthly, Good examples. (No churches unprovided of presbyters, in the plural number, Acts xiv. 23.)

Thirdly, The deacons providing for the poor, Acts vi. 3-6.

Fourthly, Both sorts chosen by the church, Acts vi. 3, 5.

Fifthly, Excommunications dispensed upon weighty occasions, and with great reverence, and with good success, 1 Cor. v. 3-5, with 2 Cor. ii. 6-8.

Sixthly, Synods imposing no other but necessary things, either in themselves, or for the present use of the church, Acts xv. 26.

This comely frame and order of the church Paul beholding, joyed in it, Col. ii. 5. The church was now called a spouse, after Christ had taken our nature upon him.

'Come with me from Lebanon, (my spouse,) with me from Lebanon : look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.' ver. 8.

‘Come with me from Lebanon.’ It is a famous hill in the uttermost border of Israel northward; Amana, a hill more northward, on the west of Syria, looking into Syria, Mesopotamia, Cilicia, and all Asia the less.

‘Hermon and Shenir.’ Two names of the same hill, though happily given to divers parts, called also Syron or Sien, Deut. iii. 9, and iv. 48.

‘The lions’ dens and mountains of the leopards.’ Jerusalem and the temple in our Saviour’s time was made a den of thieves and robbers, Mat. xxi. 13, and xii. 17; Luke xix. 46; but in the apostles’ time, after the ascension, the rulers grew more fierce and cruel, spilling the blood of Stephen, and making havoc of the church: so then, in this verse, Christ calls his church of the Christian Jews,

First, To behold from Lebanon, Hermon, Amana, the church of the Gentiles gathered in Antioch, Phenice, Cyrene, Cyprus, &c.

Secondly, To come out from those dens of ravenous persecutors at Jerusalem, and to prepare herself to dwell among the Gentiles. Upon the persecution of Stephen the faithful wandered into these parts, and preached the gospel, partly to the Jews, and after to the Gentiles also, Acts xi. 18–20; whereupon great numbers of the Gentiles believed, Acts xi. 21; which when tidings thereof came to Jerusalem, it was as the voice of Christ calling the church of Jerusalem to send Barnabas to them, to see the churches there and to establish them, ver. 22–24. Afterwards, when the church of the Gentiles increased in number and grace, and the Jews increased and grew up in blasphemy and rage against the gospel, Christ called his church at Jerusalem to leave those dens and mountains of lions and leopards, Acts xxii. 21, and xiii. 46.

‘My sister,’ ver. 9. This implieth that Christ now speaketh, not to the mother church of the Jews, but to a sister church, the church of the Gentiles; such a sister as is also a spouse, a true church, now first called a sister by reason of the accession of the church of the Gentiles.

‘Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.’

‘Thou hast ravished my heart, thou hast ravished my heart.’ This implies that Christ was overcome exceedingly with the love of the church; for such

repetitions imply, in the Hebrew phrase, a superlative excellency.

This church so affecting Christ was Antioch, the first church of the Gentiles, seated between Amana and Lebanon; for Barnabas, seeing the grace of God upon them, was not a little glad of it, so that his spirit was stirred up to exhort them to continue and grow up, Acts xi. 23, 24; yea, he went out and sought Saul, to bring him among them, ver. 25, 26; and they both spent a whole year there, and did win much people, so that that church was first called Christian, they first had their husband’s name, the name of Christ, first put upon them, for the forwardness of his love to them, and theirs to him.

‘With one of thy eyes.’ The eyes of the church are several, according as the church may be severally considered; for if the church be considered as assembled together to public duties, so the ministers of the church are the eyes, amongst whom they at Antioch excelled, as Agabus and others, Acts xi. 27, 28, and xiii. 1; among whom the Lord was especially delighted with Barnabas and Saul, who were sent immediately by the Spirit of Christ to enlighten all the neighbour countries, Acts xiii. 2, to xiv. 27. So they two, joined in one office, were as one eye to enlighten all the parts. But if the church be considered in the members apart, the eyes thereof are knowledge and faith, John viii. 56. In this church faith excelled, resting upon Christ alone without Moses’s ceremonies, which the Jews would have thrust upon them, Acts xv. 1–3.

‘With one chain of thy neck.’ Chains signified laws, binding as chains, chap. i. 10. Now the church of Antioch sending up Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, about the contention which Cerinthus, as the stories think, and others raised at Antioch concerning the necessity of the ceremonial laws, Acts xv. 2, the apostles or elders made a law or decree to abrogate the ceremonies, and yet enjoin some things, partly necessary in themselves, as to avoid fornication; partly necessary to avoid the offence of the Jews, as to abstain from blood, &c. This law the apostles and elders hanged as a chain upon the neck of the church of Antioch and other churches, Acts xv. 23–29; whence that church received great consolation, ver. 31, and the other churches establishment and increase, Acts xvi. 4, 5.



‘How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!’ ver. 10.

‘How fair is thy love, my sister!’ Sister implies the same, and suchlike Gentile churches, whose love is here set forth,

First, By the fairness of it.

Secondly, By the strength, sweetness, cheerfulness, implied in the preferring it above wine.

How fair, and strong, and sweet, and cheerful was the love of the church of Antioch! which aforehand prepared a contribution of their own accord for the poor saints at Jerusalem, even every man according to his ability, Acts xi. 29. 30. The like or greater love seemed in the poor churches of Macedonia, 2 Cor. viii. 1–5. A fair love for poor men to send relief to others; a strong love for deeply poor to send rich liberality; yet more strong and sweet to pray the messengers with much entreaty to receive it, and a cheerful love to do all this in abundance of joy, and beyond the apostles’ own expectation.

This kind of benevolence the apostle calleth an odour of a sweet smell, Phil. iv. 18; it was sweeter and better than wine. All this love shewed to the poor saints Christ takes here as done to himself, as he will also take it at the last day, Mat. xxv. 35–40. The decays of this first love shew how great this love was at the first, Rev. ii. 2–4.

‘The smell of thine ointments than all spices,’ ver. 10. Ointments are the graces of God’s Spirit, chap. i. 3; these gave a sweet report far and near in those primitive churches, Rom. i. 8; Col. ii. 5; 1 Thes. i. 6–8.

‘Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon,’ ver. 11.

‘Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue.’ This commendeth the doctrine and ministry of those first churches in these four respects:

First, For the readiness and flowingness of it; it dropped forth of itself, it needed not to be pressed and constrained, as a honeycomb.

Secondly, For the sweetness of it, as the honey or the honeycomb.

Thirdly, For the wholesomeness of it, as milk.

‘The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.’ Lebanon is full of sweet trees of spices growing in it, which yield a fragrant smell even afar off. Garments are,

First, Partly the wedding garments of Christ’s righteousness.

Secondly, Partly the gracious carriage wherewith they clothed themselves in their outward conversation: they clothed and decked themselves with Christ, not only to their justification, but with his Spirit to their sanctification; which shews forth itself in their humility, meekness, patience, honesty, faithfulness, diligence, serviceableness of their outward carriage, so far forth as that the heathen smelled a sweet savour in their whole course, Phil. iv. 8; 1 Thes. iv. 9–11; 1 Pet. ii. 12; 1 John iii. 22, 24; Euseb., lib. iii. cap. 30; Plin. Epist., lib. x.; Epist. 97; yea, even in Trajan’s time, when the smell of garments was not so strong: yet what a sweet testimony doth Pliny himself, though a persecutor, give of them, when he said he could find no fault with them, but that they rose early, and went into the woods to sing hymns to one Jesus.

*Use 1.* This, first, is to reform their judgments who speak of the apostolical church as an infant and rude church, whereas Christ, whose eyes were as a flame of fire, and who best knew it, commends it for perfection of beauty, and saith it was fair; so that if a church were such, Christ might embrace it with both his arms.

This is the church, excellent for her ministers, excellent for common Christians, which had pure eyes of knowledge and faith; so that by how much nearer any church comes to this, by so much the fairer it is; and by how much any church comes short of it, by so much the fouler it is.

*Use 2.* Secondly, This doth teach us that not abuses, but the toleration of them, doth blemish a church, and detract from the perfect beauty of it, for otherwise in the primitive churches were found schisms, heresies, a denying the resurrection, uncharitable going to law, incest, love-feasts in the Lord’s supper, strange tongues in the public worship, 1 Cor. xi. 13, 14, 19–22, and xiv. and xv.; and yet, because the apostles stood out against these

and reformed them, the church still retains her perfect beauty. In the church of Ephesus there were false apostles, Rev. ii. 2, yet it was a church; so it is, corruptions not cut off defile a church. As we then desire the church should be pure, leave we all our sins and corruptions which may any way blemish the beauty of the church.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, This teaches us to be ready to extol and acknowledge, as occasion serveth, other men's labours above our own. Christ gathered a church in his own time which he called fair, ver. 1; but this church, gathered by his apostles, he calleth all fair, ver. 7. It grieveth him not to ascribe thousands to himself, and ten thousands to them; yea, he foretold it, and promised it freely aforehand, John xiv. 12. How far was he from a spirit of envy and emulation, though indeed all their success was by his grace and blessing, as Paul said, 'By the grace of God I am that I am!' 1 Cor. xv. 10. The contrary spirit of emulation hindereth churches from taking that which is their own from one another.

*Use 4.* Fourthly, Hence we learn in what cases one church may step from another, to wit,

First, When Christ leaveth a church, and goeth away with us from it: 'Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me;' so when Christ leaves and forsakes a church, we may leave it and go out with him.

Secondly, When a church is become a universal spotted leopard, and a cruel lion, blaspheming and persecuting the gospel of Christ, as Acts xix. 9, and xiii. 50, 51.

These things were found in Rome, from whence we departed; not in England, (blessed be the Lord,) from whom the Separatists would have us to depart: but Christ still vouchsafes to be with us, converting souls, feeding his lambs, hearing our prayers; we may also worship Christ in truth without fear of laws, yea, with acceptance. When Christ goes, let all his faithful spouses go with him; when there are dens of lions, and men cannot keep the profession of Christ, but fall into their mouths, then it is time to go; but are there these causes now? Doth not Christ dwell here in the simplicity of his ordinances? As long as Christ is here in England, let us not go away, but say, as Peter and John, 'Lord, to whom

shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life,' John vi. 68. As long as Christ is pleased to feed us, to drop milk and honey into our souls, let us not depart.

*Use 5.* Fifthly, This may teach us how to knit the heart of Christ to us in ravishing affection, by cleaving to Christ with settled purpose, Acts xi. 23, by abounding in helpfulness to the saints, by procuring and keeping faithful shepherds, by burdening the church, not with many chains of laws, ver. 9, but only with few, and those necessary: all these are formerly mentioned in the church of Antioch. As ever we desire to have the Lord Jesus Christ to love us, let us grow in knowledge, faith, and all saving graces of his Spirit, and hereby shew our love to him, and then we shall find Christ ravished with our love.

*Use 6.* Sixthly, This doth teach us what kind of love Christ acknowledgeth and embraceth; to wit, fair, strong, sweet, cheerful, in an enlarging ourselves to the relief of his poor saints, ver. 10.

*Use 7.* Seventhly, This doth teach ministers how to make their ministry amiable to Christ, not to preach once a month, or quarterly, by the preaching of the law, but to be full as the honeycomb dropping out of itself, ver. 11; to preach sweet doctrine as honey, and wholesome as milk, for the nourishment of Christ's lambs.

The pastors and ministers of the primitive church did this without help of universities; what a shame then is this for us to come short of them in such abundance of outward helps and means! Wouldst thou be a faithful minister? let thy doctrine drop as honey; preach willingly, freely, sweetly, comfortably.

*Use 8.* Lastly, This may learn and stir up Christians so to walk, and so to furnish ourselves with inward graces, and with outward commendable carriage, as may yield a sweet savour and smell to God and man, that it may be like the smell of Lebanon, that men may smell a sweet savour that come near them: let our hearts be inwardly furnished with the graces of God as with sweet ointments; and our outward garments, our outward conversation, so directed with honesty, integrity, humility, meekness, and love, &c., that our names be not dishonoured, much less God by our means. Cast we aside stinking drunkenness, whoredom,

malice, covetousness, &c. And thus doing we shall take away all offence; so doing, Christ shall look at us as his fair spouse, and say, 'Thou art all fair, my love,' ver. 7.

'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse,' chap. iv. 12 to v. 2.

After the church gathered by the ministry of the apostles, next followeth that under the ten persecutions, which is here described,

First, By her restraint, ver. 13.

Secondly, By her privacy, ver. 14.

Thirdly, By her fruitfulness, refreshing and watering others, ver. 15.

Fourthly, By her prayer in this estate: wherein consider,

1. The petitions; which are three:

First, For the arising of the wind, and coming into the south, ver. 16.

Secondly, For favourable blasts of it, and that for this end, the flowing forth of her spices.

Thirdly, That Christ would come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits, ver. 16.

2. Christ's answer thereunto:

First, He cometh into his garden.

Secondly, He gathereth and enjoyeth the fruits of it.

Thirdly, He fills his church's friends with a large measure of plenty, chap. v. 1.

'A garden,' ver. 12. The church is here so called, as ver. 13, an orchard; or, as it is in the original, a paradise, as if this were the garden of Eden. All the world is as a wilderness, or at least a wild field; only the church is God's garden or orchard, in these three respects:

First, As the garden of paradise was the habitation of Adam in the estate of innocency, so is the church of all those who are renewed into innocency.

Secondly, As in that garden were all manner of pleasant and wholesome herbs and trees growing, so in the church are all manner of useful and savoury spirits.

Thirdly, As a man walketh in his garden to refresh himself, so doth Christ walk in his church, yea, and calleth his friends thither to walk with him.

'A spring, a fountain.' Not because the church is the fountain of grace, but because, Christ being in

it, it is the spring or fountain of the waters of life unto all, Zech. xiii. 1; Ps. lxxxvii. 7.

'A garden, spring, fountain, enclosed, shut up, sealed.' Not by a pale or wall of defence by Christian magistrates, but rather shut up by restraint; for the word signifies to enclose or shut up, as with locks and fetters.

Again, the church prayeth for the enlargement of the flowing of her spices, ver. 16, and therefore her present shutting up was uncomfortable to her.

The church was then said to be shut up,

First, Because under the persecutions it was shut up in prisons, and other places of punishment, as under locks and fetters.

Secondly, Because the church then assembled in private close places, woods, dens, &c., and not in the open places of towns or cities.

Thirdly, Because it was shut up from free access of foreigners, men without; neither were the emperors willing their subjects should repair to them, nor the church willing to admit all promiscuously.

'Thy plants,' ver. 13, 14; that is, thy children or members, as an orchard of pomegranates, camphire; ver. 14, spikenard, saffron, calamus, cinnamon. The children of the church are compared to these wholesome and sweet fruits, trees, herbs, in a double respect:

First, Because the virtues of these fruits and spices are especially seen when they are cut and poured out, or beaten, or burned, or bruised; so it is with the graces of God's children, they are chiefly exercised by the hard dealing of persecutors.

Secondly, There was in the faithful then persecuted a resemblance of the virtues of these fruits and spices.

Pomegranates repress and restrain the heat of choler, the malignity of fevers, the looseness of the belly; they also comfort the stomach and bowels, and prevent faintings and swoonings.

Camphire, with his sweetness of smell, delighteth and strengtheneth the spirits, checreth up the mind, helps the stone, restrains ulcers.

Spikenard stayeth distillations from the head, strengtheneth the stomach, digesteth cold humours, helpeth conception.

Saffron thinneth phlegm, helps lethargies, coughs, and pleurisies, furthereth digestion, comforteth the

heart, redresses the rottenness of the other parts, which also are strengthened.

Calamus helps the passages of the urine, and the faults of the reins, helpeth also the womb and conception.

Cinnamon strengtheneth and cheereth the spirits and mind, drieth up rotten matter, helpeth against poison, warmeth and strengtheneth the stomach to digestion.

Frankincense restraineth and helpeth ulcers, gouts, fluxes of blood, cleanseth and glueth up wounds and ulcers.

Myrrh refresheth the brain, drieth up superfluous humours, helpeth straitness of breath, restraineth ulcers and itchiness, filleth ulcers and wounds with flesh.

Aloes cleanse tough phlegm and choler, dry up raw and cold humours, preserve the rest from putrifying, open obstructions, strengthen the stomach strongly.<sup>1</sup>

Suitable to the virtues of these fruits and spices, persecution bred and stirred up in the faithful graces of like efficacy, to restrain heats of emulation, contention, ambition; to repress ulcers of malignity and disaffection one to another; to heal the coldness, hypocrisy, and rottenness of their spirits; to stay distillations of cold raw matters, dropping from the head bishops of Rome; as also to strengthen appetite to the word, to comfort the faint-hearted, to knit the members together.

'A fountain of gardens,' &c., ver. 15. For the church, pouring out her confessions and martyrdoms for the truth, propagated and watered many churches; for *sanguis martyrum* was *semen ecclesie*, a well of living waters, John iv. 10. The church was not then dried up, but plentifully stored with the graces of the Spirit, 'streams from Lebanon.' The churches were stored with such graces of the Spirit as streamed and issued out from the mountains of Israel, the writings of the prophets and apostles.

'Awake, or arise, O north wind,' &c., ver. 16. The church's desire that a wind might arise in the north, and come into the south; to wit, that Constantine, born in York, would come into the southern

<sup>1</sup> Fernelius de Method. Medend., lib. iv. cap. 7, 9, 19, 21, 22, 26, 27, lib. vi. cap. 12, 13, 14, 12.

parts, and take the empire upon him, ('and blow upon my garden,') driving away the blasts of early persecutions, and breathe favourably and wholesomely upon the church, cooling the tempestuous heats of the persecutions which the church endured. The church prayeth not the south to come, but the north to come into the south, else,

First, The word blow, if it had reference to both winds, should have been of the plural number.

Secondly, North wind and south wind blowing together would interrupt and cross one another by their contrariety.

'That the spices thereof may flow forth,' ver. 16. That the gospel and ordinances of Christ and the graces of his children, which were there restrained from their free manifestation by the persecutions, might have free passage.

'Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat of his pleasant fruits.' Let Constantine come to them, and partake of the benefits of the church's serviceable graces to God and him.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE TEXT.

Ver. 1. *I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

Ver. 2. *I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.*

Ver. 3. *I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?*

Ver. 4. *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.*

Ver. 5. *I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.*

Ver. 6. *I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.*

Ver. 7. *The watchmen that went about the city found*

*me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.*

Ver. 8. *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.*

Ver. 9. *What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?*

Ver. 10. *My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.*

Ver. 11. *His head is as the most fine gold; his locks are bushy, and black as a raven:*

Ver. 12. *His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set:*

Ver. 13. *His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh:*

Ver. 14. *His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl; his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires:*

Ver. 15. *His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold; his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars:*

Ver. 16. *His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

#### THE EXPLANATION.

Ver. 1. *I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

Constantine came into the church, enjoyed the fellowship of it, did partake in all the parts of it, yea, and richly endowed it; so that the church and all her friends did eat and drink, yea, and did drink abundantly, of wealth, preferments, &c., whence it was that she fell into a deep sleep, chap. iv. 12.

Use 1. First, This serves to stir us up to thankfulness and fruitfulness to God, who hath planted us, not in the wilderness of the world, but in the garden of his church. If we now transgress, as Adam did, eating of the forbidden fruits, Gen. iii. 6, 11, 12, 24, and ii. 17, God will take his garden from us, and cast us out of it.

Use 2. Secondly, This lets us see all the goodly

situations of the earth are but dunghills and deserts in comparison of the church. The church is a garden, and in it are fountains of living waters for every thirsty soul.

Use 3. Thirdly, Though the church be sometimes in open view of all, as a city set on a hill, Mat. v. 14, yet it is sometimes also otherwise, enclosed, shut up, sealed.

Use 4. Fourthly, When the church is shut up in corners and conventicles, the members of it hatch not treasons, schisms, factions, but still remaineth as a garden, orchard, fountain, yielding sweet waters, savoury and wholesome fruits.

Use 5. Fifthly, See the wonderful use of afflictions and persecutions to the church; what savoury, and wholesome, and precious graces are thereby exercised; yea, how mightily doth the church then spread when it is most restrained.

Use 6. Sixthly, See then what the weapons of the church were against their persecutors; not daggers, dags, powder, pistols, rebellions, treasons, &c., but prayers for more seasonable times.

Use 7. Seventhly, We are to be stirred up to pray that God would now stir up a wholesome north wind to blow favourably upon the churches beyond the seas, and strongly against their enemies.

Use 8. Eighthly, This may teach us, whilst we enjoy at home these fair blasts, not to stream forth the unsavoury corruptions of our own spirits, but the sweet graces of God; else we abuse these sweet opportunities we do enjoy.

Use 9. Lastly, It is a time of much rejoicing when God stirreth up kings and princes to come into the fellowship of the church, and to partake of God's ordinances in the same.

'I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying,' &c., chap. v. 2 to vi. 4.

Now followeth the description of the estate of the church from Constantine's time to the time of restoring of the gospel, and reforming of the church by the ministry of Luther and other late divines.

After that Constantine had largely endowed the church with peace, and wealth, and honour, it fell into an estate of carnal security, which carnal security is described,

First, By a comparison, resembling it to sleep;

which sleep of hers is amplified by the divers conditions : yet my heart waketh.

Secondly, By the carriage of Christ towards her in this her sleep ; where observe,

1. The means he useth to awake and stir her up, which were,

First, Calling to her and knocking, as ver. 2.

Secondly, Putting in his hand by the hole of the door, ver. 4.

2. The success of those means, or the respect she gave to them, or the use she made of them, which was double :

First, His calling and knocking she neglecteth wholly, upon very slight pretences and excuses, ver. 3.

Secondly, His putting in his hand by the hole of the door ;

1. She is affected with it : ' my bowels were moved for him,' ver. 4.

2. She upon it sought him ; which is further set forth,

First, By the degrees of her seeking him :

1. She arose to open to him, ver. 5.

2. Her hands and fingers dropped myrrh upon the handles of the lock, ver. 5.

3. She opened to her beloved, ver. 6.

Secondly, By the fruits or success of her seeking, where is interpreted the fruit or success of these two degrees of her seeking, in regard,

1. Of Christ : ' he was gone, he had withdrawn himself,' &c., ver. 6.

2. Of the watchmen, of whom she asketh not for her beloved ; but they finding her seeking Christ, they

First, Smote her.

Secondly, Wounded her.

Thirdly, Took away her veil from her, ver. 7.

Fourthly, She, not discouraged with this bad dealing and hard usage of the watchmen, added a fourth degree in her seeking of Christ ; she chargeth the daughters of Jerusalem to move Christ for her, ver. 8, the success or fruit whereof is added ; for upon this charge,

1. The daughters of Jerusalem are stirred and occasioned to inquire of her who Christ is, ver. 9.

2. She by their inquiry is occasioned to describe him,

First, By his colours, ver. 10.

Secondly, By his eminency, ver. 10.

Thirdly, By his several members and parts, ver. 11-16.

Fourthly, By his amiableness, ver. 16.

3. The daughters of Jerusalem by this her description of him are stirred up to affect him, and to promise their fellowship in seeking of him with her, chap. vi. 1.

' I sleep,' ver. 2. The church, surfeiting with abundance of prosperity in Constantine's time, neglected the purity and power both of doctrine and worship, and received corruptions, of which were prayers to saints, building of temples to them, superstitious regard of their relics, images, and their worship, ceremonies annexed to their sacraments, choice of meats, affecting and applauding monkish life, purgatory, &c.

' My heart waketh.' The church was still awake,

First, To hearty devotion, according to their knowledge, and beyond it.

Secondly, To discern some such gross heresies as quenched the heart and life of Christianity ; as the impiety of Arius denying the Godhead of Christ ; Macedonius and Eunomius denying the person of the Holy Ghost ; of Nestorius dividing the person in Christ ; of Eutyches, confounding their natures : other straw and stubble built upon the foundation they neglected.

' It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open.' Christ used good means to awaken his spouse, and to raise her up from this carnal security.

First, He calleth to her in the voice of sundry good divines, who complained of the intolerable burden of human inventions wherewith the common Christians were defiled and dabbled, as Christ here complains. His locks and hair were full of the drops of the night—drops which coldness of religion and darkness of ignorance engendered.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, He knocked by the raps and blows which Constantius, Valens, and Julian gave to the church, the two former persecuting the orthodox bishops and ministers and other Christians in favour of the Arians, and Julian making flat apostasy from the church, and subtly supplanting the nursing of religion.

<sup>1</sup> August. Epist., 119.

‘I put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?’ ver. 3.

‘I have put off my coat.’ Thus upon slight pretence the church refuseth to open to Christ: she pretends religion, and the worship of God would appear too naked if it were not clothed with goodly and comely human inventions; how then should she in so naked a manner open to Christ? Human inventions do not clothe religion, or the church professing it, with any comely ornaments; but, as it were, with warm blankets lap her and lull her asleep in the bed of perfunctory worship and carnal security.

I do not here conceive that the church acknowledgeth she hath cast off her garments of Christ’s righteousness; for then how should she remain the spouse of Christ? yea, how then should her heart have been otherwise than asleep too? but only she pleadeth she should appear too naked if she should open to Christ, if she should worship him in the simplicity and nakedness of his simple ordinances.

‘I have washed my feet.’ Not with the laver of regeneration, for that would have been no impediment, but a furtherance to the pure worship of God; but she had washed her feet, she had freed and cleansed her conversation from defilements of secular affairs; she had taken up a devout regard of virginity, or hermitish or monkish solitary retiredness. She being cleansed and washed in these devices, cannot betake herself to worship the Lord in his simple ordinances, and in the ways of her calling, without some defilement: thus marriage and worldly business, though both allowed by God, yet seem a defilement in comparison of more strict superstitious devotion.

‘My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him,’ ver. 4.

‘My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door:’ or, ‘My beloved put down his hand by the hole of the door.’ Either of which imply that Christ did at first use means for himself to open the door, when she would not, attempting to remove the impediments which hinder him from enjoying his spouse. First, ‘Put his hand by the hole of the door’ when he stirred up Christian emperors, such as Martianus, and both the Theodosii, to call synods, and to command the fathers

assembled to give all diligence to root out all heresies and depravations of doctrine and worship, that the pure and holy faith might shine forth.

How easily might the church upon such encouragements have broken the bars and bolts of superstition crept into the worship of God, whereby Christ was debarred from drawing near to them! The bishops assembled in those councils of that time condemned those gross heresies which blasphemed the doctrine of the Trinity; but how deeply did they neglect to redress all other enormities and corruptions! Besides, Christ is said to put in his hand by the hole of the door, when he puts his Spirit, which is the power and finger of God, Mat. xii. 28, with Luke xi. 20, into the hearts of his people, whereby they are enlightened to know him better, and stir up men honestly to seek after him. So Christ enlightened and stirred up Leo Isauricus, Constantine’s son, and Leo Copronymus, to bend their best endeavours to root out idolatry, and to remove images, which were one of the chiefest abuses in God’s worship.

‘My bowels were moved for him.’ These good princes, and other Christians at that time, were strongly and inwardly affected to the purity of God’s worship, in which alone Christ is found.

‘I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock,’ ver. 5.

‘I rose up to open to my beloved.’ The church under these good emperors rose up out of the blankets of these human inventions wherewith she was covered in a bed of sleeping devotion, and endeavoured to restore openly the simplicity of God’s worship, rejecting images and idolatry.

‘My hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.’ The endeavours of the church were sweet, and delectable, and acceptable to Christ, and savoury to the people, to preserve them, as myrrh, from further persecution, when Constantine, the son of Leo Isauricus, called the seventh Constantinopolitan council, and there truly and solemnly convinced and condemned the worship of images; as also when Charles the Great did the like some forty years after at a synod in Frankfort.

‘I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had

withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer,' ver. 6.

'I opened to my beloved.' This attempt of the church in executing in some places the decrees of these synods was an opening of the door to Christ: images and idolatry being shut forth, there is a door open for Christ to enter.

'But my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone.' Christ did not delight to reveal himself in their public assemblies, though images were in some places well removed, both because those decrees for removing of images were not generally received and executed, through the coming in of the bishop of Rome; and because the worship of God was still full of heathenish and Jewish superstitions, which Christ took no pleasure in.

'My soul failed when he spake.' The faithful in those times were assembled with fear and grief to consider how Christ now speaketh to them afar off, comes not near to their hearts and consciences; so that now, though they used such means to find him as the times afforded, yet Christ did take no pleasure in those means, in those worships, nor to their sense, in those that used them.

'The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me,' ver. 7.

'The watchmen that went about the city found me.' These watchmen are the bishops and ministers of that time; as also the keepers of the walls may well be the magistrates: for civil government is a wall of defence to the church of God.

'They found me.' And yet the church inquireth not of them, as she had done before of other watchmen, chap. iii. 3, 'Have you not seen him whom my soul loves?' For she knew these watchmen were of another spirit; rather wolves in sheep's clothing, and more ready to beat her from Christ than to bring her to Christ. They smote me with censures of excommunications, as Gregory the Third pope of Rome did Leo Isauricus for his endeavours. Afterwards, when sundry Christians, having intelligence that the bishops and doctors were assembled in a temple at Byzantium, to give sentence for restoring of images, in the days of the empress Irene,

came upon them, and forced them with weapons to leave off such decrees; these people were afterwards disarmed and banished into sundry islands. Thus were the faithful smitten with the censures of excommunication by the watchmen of the city, of banishment by the keepers of the walls.

'They wounded me.' With the canons of the second council of Nice, whither that council, assembled in the temple of Byzantium, and scattered by the people, was afterwards translated by the counsel of the bishops of Rome. In this council images were again restored, to the great grief of the godly, yea, to the wounding of their hearts. The sentence of a general council in the behalf of any error is no small wound to the whole church.

'They took away my veil from me;' when they forced the bishops of Rhodes, Nice, Neo-Cæsarea, Hierapolis, and others, to recantation, who before had worthily opposed images. To bring men to open recantation, to lay open their nakedness, especially when they recant from the truth, is to take away the veil.

'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love,' ver. 8.

'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem.' The church, finding herself so hardly dealt with by the ministers and magistrates, would not give over her search after Christ, yet now seeketh him in the fellowship of private Christians, and stirreth them up to pray for her.

'Tell him I am sick of love.' That is, in your prayers acknowledge that the church is ready to fail and perish for want of his presence and fellowship in his public ordinances.

'What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?' &c., ver. 9.

The Christians, the daughters of Jerusalem, from this day forward to the days of Peter Waldus, of whom the Waldenses took their name, were very ignorant of Christ, and therefore they ask who he was, and wherein better than another. But instead of him they magnified the church; holy mother church was all in all with them; her they acknowledged to be fairest among women, though they see nothing in Christ better than in another.

'My beloved is white and ruddy,' &c., ver. 10.



Thus Petrus Waldus, a citizen of Lyons, opened Christ to the daughters of Jerusalem, to the children of the church, setting before them the white innocency of true holiness in him, and the ruddy scarlet dye of his death. The righteousness and death of Christ, plainly yet powerfully opened by him, brought many to behold Christ, and to profess him, who, when by persecution stirred up against them by the bishop of Rome, they were dispersed into many places—multiplied exceedingly; and being then called Albigenses, in many battles fought against the soldiers which Pope Innocent the Third had sent against them, under conduct of Simon Mounteford and others, signed with the cross; in many of which the Albigenses prevailed, helped by Raymond, Earl of Thelus, and Peter, King of Aragon, though afterwards they were overcome and scattered further into many places of Christendom. So in regard of these troops of many thousands, Christ is here called the standard-bearer, as the word signifieth, or the choice of ten thousand. Again, at that time Christ may be said to be white and ruddy in regard of his members, who were then white with innocency of life, yet ruddy, enduring persecution.

‘His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.’ ver. 11.

‘His head is as the most fine gold.’ Christ comes now to be described in his members more particularly. This head of gold Christ shewed on the earth in the person of Frederick the Second, emperor of Rome, a prince of much purity and worth, as a head of the church of fine gold. He contended with many popes about the headship of the church, advanced the headship of Christ and of himself, his vicegerents, above the counterfeit head of the pope’s supremacy. He wrestled for Christ against them with much difficulty, yet prevailed; so that even in the popish schools his election of God was agreed and condescended unto by sundry.

‘His locks are bushy or curled, and black as a raven.’ Curled black hair is a sign of heat and courage and wit in him that it groweth upon. Such was the emperor himself, and such were the common Christians of that age that did depend upon their emperor; they stuck close to him. Learned men with wit, more than former ages had yielded, and soldiers with courage maintained his person and cause.

‘His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set,’ ver. 12.

Doves diving in rivers of waters, dive their bellies deep into the waters, so that their eyes look close and narrowly upon it.

First, The eyes are here set forth by their care of the church. He is not so far off removed from it that he had need of the pope to be his visible vicar to look to it.

Secondly, By their mild innocency, implied in that they are doves’ eyes and washed with milk; whereas the Pope’s eyes were as hawks’ eyes, looking eagerly after the prey.

Thirdly, By their fit standing, so as they may well look to the whole body; whereas the pope’s eyes cannot possibly watch to look well to the estate of the church so far off him.

To this purpose tended the doctrine of the faithful divines in the following age, such as Michael Cesenus, Petrus de Carbania, Johannes de Poliaco, and such as followed them.

‘His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh,’ ver. 13.

‘His cheeks are as a bed of spices.’

Cheeks imply the outward face of the faithful church, for the cheeks are a place most conspicuous, which shews that the faithful of those times were as beds of spices and sweet flowers, to wit, not gathered into any set garden, as afterwards in Luther’s time, but scattered here and there, chap. vi. 2, yet of sweet and precious savour in the nostrils of Christ; yea, one Nicholas de Bibrath, living about that time, compareth faith and piety in the church to spice rare and dear.

‘His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.’ The doctrine of the church at those times was such as, like myrrh, served to preserve the faithful from putrefaction, according to that, ‘That which ye have already, hold fast till I come,’ Rev. ii. 25. In the primitive apostolic church her lips dropped like a honeycomb, being of stroug, sweet relish to delight and nourish to full growth, chap. iv. 11. But the lips of this church drop rather myrrh than honey; they rather preserved some truth of grace than yielded any abundant nourishment to procure increase to the church.

‘His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires,’ ver. 14.

‘His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl.’ Hands are instruments of action; their being set with gold rings implieth their purity and dignity. The beryl cleareth moisture and dim sight, Franciscus Rudis, de Gemma., lib. ii. cap. 8. All these shew that the ministry of the gospel should be then more powerful; and indeed God, about that time, A.D. 1300, stirred up Dantes, Marcellius, Potavinus, Ocham, Gregorius Ariminensis, Petrarchus, Wickliffe, and many more, whose ministry brought on so many, that some have counted it the first resurrection; yea, the magistrates of that time, Ludovicus Bavarus the emperor, Philip of France, Edward the Third of England, stood out in many things against the pope, as those whose hands had got more strength, and better felt their own worth, and whose eyes were cleared to see more light than their predecessors.

‘His belly as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.’ The belly is a hidden part of the body, yet such from which the rest is nourished; which fitly resembleth the sacraments here, as also chap. vii. 2, which being hid from those that are without, yet nourish the whole body as a heap of wheat. The doctrine of the sacraments, and the pure administration of the same, was at this time restored by John Wickliffe, and embraced by his followers, though condemned in the Council of Constance. These sacraments are said to be overlaid with sapphires, whose property is to strengthen and cherish the principal solid parts, because of the efficacy of the sacraments truly taught and administered, to strengthen and quicken God’s graces in us.<sup>1</sup>

‘His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars,’ ver. 15.

‘His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.’ These two legs seem to be John Huss and Jerome of Prague, who stood constantly in defence of the truth, even unto death, being established in the truth and grace of God, as it were pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.

‘His countenance is as Lebanon.’

<sup>1</sup> Rucus Deginius, lib. i. cap. 2.

The faithful grew so plentiful in Bohemia that they seemed, even to the adversary, to be like a thick wood, as many and firm, which they were not able to hew down; and therefore they were forced in the Council of Constance to allow them the use of the cup in the Lord’s supper, because they could not by strong hand keep them from it.

‘Excellent as the cedars.’ The cedar is a tree eminent for tallness and soundness, or durability: such was then the face and countenance of the church, observed to grow up in conspicuous eminency, and in soundness of love to the truth, that the popish teachers were not able to corrupt them any longer with their sedncements.

‘His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem,’ ver. 16.

‘His mouth is most sweet.’

The doctrine of the gospel was taught more and more savourly by Johannes Rochesana and other ministers in Bohemia.

‘He is altogether lovely, or desirable.’ Christ then began again so to dispense himself to his church, in giving them the faith and sense of his goodness, that now they saw or found nothing in Christ, or in the profession of his name, but what was wholly desirable. The rebukes of Christ began now to seem greater riches than the treasures of Egypt or Babylon in some former ages, Heb. xi. 26. They that saw the truth were often brought to yield and recant; but these saw nothing to be more desired than Christ. Besides, he is now called holy and desirable, because so many so generally were stirred up to desire and seek reformation. The regions were white and ready to the harvest, else Luther had not found such good success in his ministry.

‘This is my beloved, and this is my friend.’

The doctrine of certainty of our adoption, justification, salvation, began now more plainly to be discerned and acknowledged. Christ is not only fair and desirable in himself, but then the church could more boldly say, ‘This is my beloved, this is my friend.’

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE TEXT.

Ver. 1. *Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.*

Ver. 2. *My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.*

Ver. 3. *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.*

Ver. 4. *Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.*

Ver. 5. *Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.*

Ver. 6. *Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.*

Ver. 7. *As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.*

Ver. 8. *There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.*

Ver. 9. *My dove, my undefiled, is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.*

Ver. 10. *Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?*

Ver. 11. *I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.*

Ver. 12. *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.*

Ver. 13. *Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.*

## THE EXPLANATION.

Ver. 1. *Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.*

The church's affectionate describing and praising

Christ stirred up many then to look after religion and reformation, ver. 1.

*Use 1.* First, We may here see the danger of surfeiting the church with wealth and pleasures and honour. Constantine had, in the first verse, inebriated the church with wealth and honour, and hereupon the church falleth into a long sleep, which she shook not wholly off for many ages. No wonder then of that speech heard from heaven, *Hodie venenum concidit in ecclesiam*; Now is poison poured or fallen into the church.

*Use 2.* Secondly, This may let us see that they have not the spirit of the church of Christ, that when they hear many voices in religion carried sundry ways, know not whom to follow, cannot discern which is the true voice of Christ among them. This church here could discern the voice of Christ even in her sleep, how much more easily if she had been well awake!

*Use 3.* Thirdly, This is to exhort both ministers and other faithful Christians to watchfulness, lest otherwise corruption in doctrine and worship grow amongst the people, till the locks of Christ be wholly dabbled with superstitions; the locks of Christ, to wit, the common Christians.

*Use 4.* Fourthly, This may teach us to know that they provide not well for the direction of their own judgments, that depend upon the voice of the ancient churches for their chief pattern and guidance in doctrine and worship. Who would build upon the words of a man (though otherwise a good man) when he is half asleep?

*Use 5.* Fifthly, Hence we may discern it is better the church should open to Christ, appearing before him in the naked simplicity of his worship, than to cover ourselves and his worship with the blankets and inventions of men's weaving, which will but lull the church asleep in drowsy performances of perfunctory worship, and cause Christ to withdraw himself from us.

*Use 6.* Sixthly, This may teach us to know, to our shame and grief, that our drowsy hearts will neglect to open to Christ upon his calling and knocking, unless he be pleased to put the finger of his Spirit into our hearts, to open an entrance for himself.

*Use 7.* Seventhly, The faithful must not wonder if, opening their hearts to Christ and seeking after

him, sometimes they find him not; for it was so with the church here, and hath been so with the faithful in all ages. We neglecting to receive him when he offereth himself, we must not wonder if for a time he neglect us.

*Use 8.* Eighthly, We may from hence learn that bad ministers will sooner bear with any disorder in people than serious seeking after Christ, and after the purity of ordinances.

*Use 9.* Ninthly, We may here see persecutions alienate not the affections of the faithful, but inflame them to more ardency and earnest pursuit after Christ, as this church did.

*Use 10.* Tenthly, It may be known the church hath lain in a deep sleep, when common Christians can more acknowledge the church than Christ himself, when they can see her to be the fairest among women, but know not any eminent worth in Christ.

*Use 11.* Eleventhly, The estate of many churches, in many ages, maketh but one body of Christ; in every of which Christ manifesteth himself, in some members more eminently than in others.

*Use 12.* Twelfthly, Christ had his faithful people and members in the world before Luther was born; yea, he shewed himself glorious in sundry of them in the darkest times of popery.

*Use 13.* Thirteenthly, In Christ it is well known there is nothing but what is lovely and desirable; even persecutions for his sake are lovely and glorious.

*Use 14.* Fourteenthly, It is no comfort, or but small, to know Christ to be every way precious and excellent, unless we can also say he is ours. 'This is my beloved, this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.'

*Use 15.* Fifteenthly, The affectionate, faithful preaching and setting forth of Christ stirreth up in others a saving knowledge of Christ, and hearty affection to him. The church here describeth Christ affectionately and faithfully, speaketh of him as her own, whence the daughters of Jerusalem are converted and stirred up to seek after him.

*Use 16.* Lastly, Hearts truly touched with sincere desire after Christ choose rather to seek him in the church, in the fellowship of the church, than by ways of separation, as this church did: 'Whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.'

'My beloved is gone into his garden,' chap. vi. 2-9. The Holy Ghost in these words descendeth to set forth the state of the church reformed by the ministry of Luther and other late divines, as in the verse following the calling of the Jews.

This reformed church diversely described,

First, By Christ's visitation of her, together with the ends thereof:

1. To feed in the gardens.
2. To gather lilies, ver. 2.

Secondly, By her mutual fellowship with Christ, ver. 3.

Thirdly, By her degrees of rising, wherein she is likened to be, ver. 4,

1. As Tirzah.
2. As Jerusalem.
3. As an army with banners.

Fourthly, By her members, ver. 5-7.

1. Eyes.
2. Hair.
3. Teeth.
4. Temples.

Fifthly, By comparing the several reformed churches as amongst themselves, and preferring one above the rest of the reformed churches there.

1. As queens, sixty.
2. As concubines, eighty.
3. As virgins without number, ver. 8.
4. As a dove; and who,

First, To Christ is undefiled.

Secondly, To the whole church as an only one, as a choice one.

Thirdly, to the rest,

1. Blessed to the daughters.
2. Praised to the queens and concubines, ver. 8, 9.

'My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the garden, and to gather lilies,' ver. 2.

'My beloved is gone down into his garden.' The church, which Christ next visited, and wherein he was first found in that general apostasy wherein the church sought Christ and could not find him.

In the former chapter was the church of Wittenberg reformed by the ministry of Luther, which was a garden; being,

First, Stored with variety of godly people, as

sweet flowers set in order, some teaching, some hearing.

Secondly, Fenced in as with a hedge, pale, or wall, by the protection of Frederick, the good Duke of Saxony.

Thirdly, A place wherein Christ walked, as we do in our gardens, to refresh himself and his friends.

'Is gone down into his garden.' Descending from those famous cities and eminent places of Rome and Constantinople into a mean country city.

'To the beds of spices.' Because in Germany, at that time, sundry Christians were called and sorted into several beds and companies in several places, though not attaining at the first to be so many gardens, so many several churches.

'To feed in the garden.' In process of time these several beds of spices (companies of Christians) grew up to the fashion of just and full churches, in Zurich, Strasburg, Brussels, Berne, Geneva, besides those in Hesse and Prussia.

'To feed,'

First, Both himself, with his people's prayers, and other worship and obedience.

Secondly, His people, with his word and sacraments, and other ordinances.

'And to gather lilies;' that is, to gather and cull more and more faithful Christians out of a wild field of worldly people into the fellowship of his church; as it were, to gather lilies into his garden.

They are called lilies,

First, For their fairness.

Secondly, For excellency or eminency, Mat. vi. 29; Prov. xii. 26.

Thirdly, For God's care in providing for them beyond their own labour and industry, Mat. vi. 28, 29.

'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies,' ver. 3.

'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine;' which words imply four things:

First, That the church had familiar fellowship with Christ in his holy public ordinances, especially in the main doctrine of pardon of sins by Christ's blood alone, and of justification by faith.

Secondly, That she enjoyed this fellowship with him before the time of her deliverance out of a Babylonish or Romish captivity; for the same words are

used upon the deliverance out of Babel, chap. ii. 15, and enjoying God's ordinances in their own country; but with this difference, there the church saith, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' because, first, he delivered her out of Babel before he gave her the free use of his ordinances; but here the church saith, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,' because she first found Christ in his ordinances before she enjoyed deliverance from subjection to Rome, for Luther preached against the pope's pardons before he rejected the supremacy of the pope.

Thirdly, Their open profession of their fellowship with Christ, when the princes of Germany openly protested against the mass and other corruptions in the church, and avowed the defence of the reformation begun, whence they were afterwards called protestants.<sup>1</sup>

Fourthly, Christ's gracious protection of those churches, especially in their first beginnings; for how should Luther, a poor friar, have attempted and gone through with so great a work, against such great and general opposition, and in the end die quietly in his bed, if Christ had not held him, as it were, in his arms?

'He feedeth among the lilies.' He refresheth himself and strengtheneth his people, conversing amongst them who strove for whiteness, and purity, and reformation.

'Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners,' ver. 4.

'Thou art beautiful as Tirzah.' Tirzah was the chief city of the kingdom of Israel after they had separated themselves from Judah, until Samaria was afterwards builded, 1 Kings xiv. 17, and xv. 33.

The city and governors of it—the people having recourse to it for judgment rather than to Jerusalem—were at first in disgrace and obloquy with the Jews for their schism and separation from the house of David at Jerusalem, and for her rebellion against the king of Judah; but this did not diminish her beauty, because this separation was from God.

Afterward Tirzah lost her beauty by erecting the golden calves, and falling off, not only from the idolatry of Solomon, 1 Kings xii. 24, wherein they

<sup>1</sup> Sleyden., lib. vi. 7.

did well, but from the true worship of God, restored and continued in the temple of Jerusalem. But Solomon here speaketh of Tirzah while she retained her beauty. And indeed the reformed churches were in this like unto Tirzah, at first in disgrace and obloquy for their separation from Rome, and rebellion against the emperor and other princes, and yet nevertheless beautiful, because this separation was from God, in regard of idolatries of the church of Rome, greater than those of Solomon.

Thus the Duke of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse were proscribed as rebels against the emperor, and yet their cause was beautiful and good. The faithful at that time in England were burned, in King Henry the Eighth's days, as heretics and refractory subjects or rebels, yet beautiful in God's sight.

'Comely as Jerusalem.' In process of time the church wore out the suspicion and disgrace of heresy and separation and rebellion, and was countenanced and adorned by royal laws in the days of King Edward the Sixth, and by laws of the empire tolerating the protestant princes, so that the church seemed as Jerusalem, the state of princes, the true church of God, and at unity also within itself, wherein the comeliness consisted, Ps. xii. 2, 3-5; for as Jerusalem had been three cities, Zion, Salem, Millo, and all three were knit together into one Jerusalem, so the three differences between Lutherans and Calvinists in doctrine and discipline at Geneva were all compacted together in brotherly love in their harmony of confessions.

'Terrible as an army with banners.' The church was beautiful as Tirzah in King Henry the Eighth's time, comely as Jerusalem in King Edward the Sixth's time, terrible as an army with banners in Queen Elizabeth's time, when the protestant princes grew formidable to the emperor, England and the Low Countries to the Spaniard and pope. How terrible was that overthrow which the Spaniard in '88 received!

'Turn away thine eyes,' &c., ver. 5. The eyes, as above, chap. iv. 9, of the church assembled, are the ministers or the members considered apart; as, first, Knowledge; secondly, Faith. In both respects the eyes of the church were wonderful amiable, so that Christ speaketh affectionately to the church

after the manner of lovers ravished with the beauty of their spouses.

'Turn away thine eyes, for they have overcome me.'

What worthy ministers did that first age of the reformed churches yield! as Luther, Calvin, Martin Bucer, Craumer, Hooper, Ridley, Latimer, &c.<sup>1</sup> What a wonderful measure of heavenly light did they of a sudden bring into the church! and that out of the midst of darkness and popery, from whence it was that the knowledge and faith of the faithful then was wonderfully enlarged, far beyond the ignorance of former times.

The eyes of the faithful in Christ's time lay under their locks, chap. iv. 1, as hindered from clear sight by many errors; but the eyes of the faithful, now seeing the truth much more plainly, are not hindered by such locks hanging over them. How clear was their faith, that having seen him which was invisible, Heb. xi. 27, feared not the fierceness of their kings and princes, but endured patiently fiery persecutions and bloody massacres!

'Thy hair is like a flock of goats.'

'Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep which go up from washing,' ver. 5, 7.

'As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.'

The estate of common Christians set out by the hair, and of the ministers set out by the teeth, and of the church governors set forth by the piece of pomegranate, was the same in the church reformed as in the primitive church, chap. iv. 1-3, where the description of these parts is used, and here repeated; only with this difference, the teeth are not so even cut in reformed churches as in Christ's time; some of them exceed their brethren in authority and jurisdiction, whereas those were framed to more brotherly love in Christ's time. Whence the teeth they are said to be even cut, which in these teeth is here left out; yet both the ministers of higher and lower rank were as sheep flocking and consorting together, washed with the laver of regeneration, fruitful and powerful in their ministry, and therefore are here described as a flock of sheep come up from the washing, 'whereof every one beareth twins, and none is barren among them,' ver. 6.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Martyr.

*Use 1.* First, We may here learn to behold a different estate of the church. Sometimes it is in a garden, sundry Christians gathered together into beds and knots, and growing up into good order together, delighting and refreshing both God and man with the savour of their sweetness. Such was and is the estate of the church reformed. Sometimes, again, the members of the church scattered abroad in the wild fields, seeking where they may find Christ, as in the former chapter.

The church is here visible as in a garden in some of their eminent and principal members. If then the papists ask, Where was the church visible before Luther? The answer is, It was visible, not in open congregations indeed, as it were gardens, but in sundry members of the church, as sweet spices and flowers, growing here and there, whom the popes and their instruments, like wild boars, sought to root out, and yet God preserveth them.

Sometime the church findeth Christ comfortably in her solemn assemblies, when good Christians are met together to serve him in the simplicity of his ordinances; sometimes, when they can find no such gardens, nor him in any place openly worshipped, yet even then they seek him here and there where they can find him.

*Use 2.* Secondly, The like uses are here to be made of these gardens, of that chap. iv. 14.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, To teach us a true description of a church. It is, as it were, a garden, an assembly of many good Christians or saints, as it were sweet spices or flowers set in order, as it were beds or knots, amongst whom Christ walketh, they enjoying fellowship with him in his public ordinances, and he with them.

*Use 4.* Fourthly, To refute the arrogancy or ignorance of the Separatists, who refuse to keep fellowship with reformed churches, whom Christ yet keeps fellowship with. Shall man be more pure than his Maker? or the sons of mortal men more holy than the sons of God?

*Use 5.* Fifthly, To exclude the popish synagogues from the number of Christ's gardens; the gardens and churches of Christ, as they have Christ walking in them, so they know it, and profess it, and rejoice in it.

'I am my well-beloved's, and my well-beloved is mine,' ver. 3. The church of Rome disdains such a

song as heretical presumption to say, 'I am my well-beloved's, and he is mine.'

*Use 6.* Sixthly, This doth teach us, that when churches keep themselves close to Christ, and to the simplicity of his ordinances, that they can say, 'I am my well-beloved's, and he is mine;' Christ will keep himself powerful and gracious amongst them for their protection and comfort; he will not fail to shew himself theirs, when they fail not to shew themselves his.

*Use 7.* Seventhly, This may teach us not to wonder if Christian assemblies be at first suspected, as Tirzah, for sedition, separation, &c. It is the lot of God's church, which, when it groweth up to be better known, will appear to be, as it is, comely as Jerusalem.

*Use 8.* Eighthly, From the description of the church here by her members—eyes, hair, teeth, temples—gather here again in the same uses made of the like description, chap. iv. 1–3, in uses 2, 3, 4, there expressed.

*Use 9.* Ninthly, Observe the reformed churches to be the same that the primitive church in Christ's time was in sundry principal members and respects, and therefore the same members in the same sort described word for word; yea, such fellowship as the church of the Jews had with Christ coming out of Babylon, the same have the reformed churches with Christ coming out of Romish Babylon, chap. ii. 16, and vi. 3.

'There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number,' ver. 8.

This verse contains the last part of the description of the estate of the reformed churches, which is a comparison of them together amongst themselves; of whom some are,

First, Queens, and they are threescore.

Secondly, Concubines, and they are fourscore.

Thirdly, Damsels, and they without number.

Secondly, One is eminent above them all unto Christ: first, A dove; secondly, Undeiled.

Secondly, Herself one.

Thirdly, Her mother, an only choice one.

Fourthly, Her daughter, blessed.

Fifthly, The queens and concubines commended her.

'There are threescore queens, and fourscore con-

cupines, and damsels, or virgins, without number,' ver. 8.

Queens differ from concubines in four respects :

First, Queens, or chief wives, are taken into fellowship with their royal husbands by solemn stipulation, and with consent and solemn rejoicing of friends. The concubines are not so, as Bilhah and Zilpah, &c., Gen. xxix. 22. A man takes such to him rather by right of dominion than by fellowship of wedlock.

Secondly, Queens, or chief wives, bring with them dowries to their husbands, 1 Kings ix. 16 ; Acts iii.

Hence Lesbonius to Lusitotes, in matrimony, would not give his sister *sine dote*, without dowry, lest he should seem to give her *in concubinatum potius quam in matrimonium*. But concubines were taken without dowry for the most part, as Hagar, Bilhah, Zilpah, &c.

Thirdly, Chief wives had the keys of the families in their own hands ; they had government of the house under and with their husbands. Hence it is that Hagar, though called Abraham's wife, yet is said to be in Sarah's hand, Gen. xvi. 3, who also corrected her, ver. 6 ; the angel calleth her Sarah's maid, ver. 7 ; and she calleth Sarah her mistress, ver. 8, as likewise the angel doth, ver. 9.

Concubines, though secondary wives, yet were but as servants, save only they were admitted to the fellowship of the bed.

Fourthly, Chief wives brought forth children, to whom belonged the inheritance ; whereas concubines' children had, for the most part, only some gifts given them, Gen. xxv. 5, 6. That Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, had inheritances among their brethren, was by extraordinary dispensation.

Queens then are such reformed congregations where such properties of queens are found. Christ, indeed, looks for no dowry from us for his own use ; he needeth nothing of ours, neither have we anything to give him, but our own nakedness, filthiness, and beggary, Ezek. xvi. 5, 6. Here therefore look at Christ in the persons of the ministers, whose vicegerents they are, and ambassadors also ; and in whose name they, being married to the churches, do beget children to Christ, 1 Cor. iv. 15 ; though ministers considered in comparison with Christ, they are

but as the friends of the bridegroom, not bridegrooms themselves, John iii. 29. Such churches then, and congregations, are queens, whom the ministers and congregations do, with mutual free consent, choose either the other ; as when the people do give up themselves, first, to the Lord, and then to the ministers by the will of God, 2 Cor. viii. 5. Of this sort are sundry congregations in England, and very many in the reformed foreign churches. Other congregations, which have ministers thrust upon them without their liking and consent, and whom ministers have to them by some clandestine conveyances, are more like to concubines.

Again, such congregations as come to their ministers with a good dowry, and comfortable and honourable maintenance, they are like wives. Others who bring little or no maintenance with them, are like to concubines, though indeed the former condition is more essential to lawful marriage ; to wit, free consent and mutual stipulation on both sides ; for as sometimes lawful wives have but poor dowries, and concubines sometimes bring large maintenance with them, so some congregations that freely consent to the acceptance of their ministers can allow them but slender maintenance, whereas some others upon whom ministers thrust themselves are richly endowed. Furthermore, such congregations as enjoy the power of the keys, they are as queens, lawful wives. The keys of the kingdom of heaven are,

First, The one of knowledge, Luke xi. 52.

Secondly, The other of jurisdiction, Mat. xviii. 18, and both of them mentioned, Mat. xvi. 19.

Where, then, a congregation enjoyeth a faithful ministry, opening an entrance into the kingdom of heaven to penitent believers, and shutting it against impenitent hypocrites and scandalous livers, there the power of the keys is not wanting ; and if withal they have liberty exercising jurisdiction, there is their queen-like or wife-like authority more complete. Of this sort are divers, both English and foreign churches, though sundry German churches, dispensing the keys of knowledge more corruptly in their doctrine of the sacrament and predestination, and neglecting the use of excommunication, do rather turn to the condition of concubines.

But such churches as have no preachers, or such



as have no power in their gifts to open and shut the kingdom of heaven to the conscience and souls of men, they are as concubines.

Lastly, Such congregations where the people remain still ignorant in darkness, and are not brought on to be begotten of God by the lively word of regeneration, but continue altogether ignorant, worldly, and profane, they are as concubines, whose children inherit not, though God may give them outward blessings; but such congregations where the word is lively to the begetting of souls to an immortal inheritance, they are lawful wives, yea, queens. Of this sort our English and foreign churches have many, God be blessed, though the church of Sardis hath but a few names, Rev. iii. 4.

‘Damsels are without number,’ &c. Damsels or virgins in this marriage song are of less reckoning, as being yet either not spoken to in way of marriage by Christ and his ministers, or coyly refusing him. Of this sort there were many churches at the first reforming of the gospel, to whom, for want of ministers, readers were sent; whence one of the martyrs wished that every able minister might have ten congregations committed to his charge, till further provision could be made; so that such churches there were, even ten to one, abundantly many, that scarcely heard of Christ’s knocking at their hearts by any conscionable ministry; yea, and how many be there at this day that either do want such ministers as do espouse them to Christ, or else do coyly deny their motions, and stand out against Christ and their ministers?

Of queens he reckoneth threescore, of concubines fourscore. A certain number put for an uncertain; and of churches, the less pure the greater.

Damsels he reckons without number:

First, Partly because they have been exceeding many of them, and are still too many.

Secondly, Partly because Christ maketh no account of them, as if they were with him *nullius numeri*, not worth the reckoning.

‘But my dove, my undefiled is one,’ &c., ver. 9. A dove is noted,

First, For her chastity;

Secondly, Mildness, or innocency, Mat. x. 10. Such are those churches which go not a-whoring after any superstition or idolatry, nor exercise that cap-

tivity of tyranny over their sister churches which the popish watchmen are taxed for, chap. v. 7, that smote and wounded the members of the churches for seeking after Christ, and took her veil from her, which are unspotted, undefiled, either,

First, Of Romish pollutions, or,

Secondly, Of worldly courses.

‘Is one.’ Such congregations are,

First, Few, as one to sixty or eighty.

Secondly, At unity, or brotherly love one with another, as one body, though scattered into many places, as England, Scotland, Germany, &c. In all Christendom some churches are more chaste, mild, and unspotted than others, even of the same country; and yet such are but few, and though few, yet at entire unity, as one body.

‘The only one of her mother, the choicest one of her that bare her,’ ver. 9. In the Hebrew phrase the whole is the mother, the parts are the members. The true catholic church of Christ is the mother of all reformed daughters; and these daughter-churches that are most chaste and mild, and undefiled, they are best esteemed, and best beloved of the mother catholic church, as coming nearest to her in chastity, innocency, purity, &c.

‘The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her,’ ver. 9. These daughters, whether they be the members of the unspotted churches mentioned in the former verse, either of both, together with these churches that are as queens and concubines, do give honourable testimony of these congregations that are most reformed, and with them all prosperity, the good things of this life, and a better.

To bless is more than to praise: praise is the acknowledging of any good thing in her, but blessing is the acknowledgment,

First, Of divine good things; and,

Secondly, Those drawing the churches and themselves therein nearer to God.

‘Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?’ &c., ver. 10–13. In these verses the calling and arising of the church of the Jews is described by six arguments:

First, By the unexpectedness of her arising, joined with the admiration of it: ‘Who is she that looketh forth?’ ver. 10.

Secondly, By the place of her arising: the morning, or the east countries.

Thirdly, By the degrees and beauty of her grace:

First, Fresh as the morning.

Secondly, Fair as the moon.

Thirdly, Bright and clear as the sun.

Fourthly, 'Terrible as an army with banners,' ver. 10.

Fourthly, By Christ's visitation of her, with the end of it, ver. 11.

Fifthly, By the unexpected helps which this church found for her return, ver. 12.

Sixthly, By the earnestness of her calling given her: Return, return, four times repeated.

'Who is this that looketh forth?' These words express the unexpected admirable arising of a new church, chap. iii. 6; and that after the reformed churches of the Gentiles. She is a Shulamite, alluding to Salem, the ancient name of Jerusalem, the mother city of the Jews.

This church then thus arising is that of the Jews which we look for; whose beginning, for sudden conversion of multitudes, shall be admirable to themselves and others, Isa. lxvi. 8, and xlix. 12.

'As the morning.' Her arising is resembled by the morning,

First, Because this church shall arise from the eastern countries, Rev. xvi. 12.

Secondly, Her arising shall be like a new resurrection from the dead, Rom. xi. 15.

Thirdly, Her arising shall be speedily, as the same phrase intimates, Isa. lviii. 8, and lx. 19, 20.

'Fair as the moon, bright as the sun.' The moon is fair by beauty communicated to her from the sun, Isa. vi. 12, 20, and xxiv. 23. In the sun's brightness is light, heat, refreshing, and all in a glorious manner, Isa. xxxiii. 24, and lx. 21. The citizens of that church shall all at that time, or at least the body of them, have their sins forgiven them by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, Isa. lix. 21; Zech. xiv. 20, 21. They shall enjoy abundant light of heavenly knowledge. They shall excel in purity of holiness. They shall abound in consolations, to the refreshing of themselves and others, Isa. lxvi. 10, 11.

'Terrible as an army with banners.' Read Rev. xix. 14, 21. The armies of the Jews shall be terrible

to the Turks and Tartars, Ezek. xxxviii. and xxxix., and to the false prophet then driven from Rome by ten Christian princes, and associating himself to the Turk for succour.

'I went down into the garden of nuts.' The Jewish synagogues, so called because of that veil of hardness and blindness drawn over their hearts, as it were a hard nut-shell over the kernel, Rom. xi. 8, 10; 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

'To see the fruits of the valleys.' Valleys lying in the shade between two mountains bring forth fruit late: so the Jews are long before they bring forth fruit unto Christ.

'To see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.' The Jews, that for hardness of heart are like a garden of nuts, yet when their conversion shall be wrought, will be as vines and pomegranates, bring forth sweet and wholesome fruits to the refreshing of God and man, Judges ix. 13.

'Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.' Or set me upon the chariots of a willing people; not that anything cometh at unawares to Christ in his own person; but because to his ministers, that in his name shall go into this garden of nuts, the Jews shall appear unexpectedly, prepared to embrace Christ's calling: they shall find the Jews as chariots of willing people, ready to march with them whithersoever in Christ's name they shall call; their soul should no sooner desire it, but they should be set in all readiness. Where also is intimated the willing readiness of a willing people among the Gentiles to convey the Jews into their country, with chariots, and horses, and dromedaries, Isa. lxvi. 20, and xlix. 23, 24.

'Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies,' ver. 13.

'Return, return, O Shulamite; return.' This call, so often repeated, Isa. lxii. 6, 7, doth imply,

First, The earnestness of the ministers that shall call them.

Secondly, The haste that they would have them to make in going through with their conversion.

'That we may look upon thee, or behold thee.' It is the desire of the ministers, and of all the faith-

ful, to behold this glorious church when she shall be called.

‘What will ye see in the Shulamite?’ But, as it were, the company of two armies, or the host of Mahanaim, Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.

This is spoken, either because the Jews shall, presently upon their conversion, marshal and rank themselves into armies against Gog and Magog, ver. 10, where she is said to arise ‘terrible as an army with banners.’ Or else, taking the word properly, the Holy Ghost compareth the Jews to a host of angels, which Jacob saw at Mahanaim, Gen. xxxii. 1; Zech. xii. 8; as indeed the feeble at that day shall be as valiant as the angels of God. This interpretation seemeth to me to be the more likely, because her warlike provision was before mentioned, ver. 10. Or otherwise, the Holy Ghost may allude to the host of Israel and Judah, which went to bring up David from Mahanaim to Jerusalem, after the Israelites were brought to see their errors in casting him off for Absalom, 2 Sam. xix. 9, 10, 14, 43; so shall the Jews at their conversion assemble for the establishment of the kingdom and throne of Christ among them, after they shall be brought to see their soul errors in casting off Christ so unworthily so long a time.

*Use 1.* The first use of this is for discerning a different estate of all Christian churches and congregations, and trial of our own parishes. In one of these ranks every congregation is found, either a queen, a concubine, or a damsel, or a dove: if we have freely consented to the entertainment of a faithful ministry, coming to us in the name of Christ; if we bring with us to him a sufficient dowry for his maintenance; if the word of God shall be powerfully dispensed amongst us, and the opening and shutting of the kingdom of heaven, and withal the key of discipline be not neglected; if our congregations bring forth many children to God, partakers of the heavenly inheritance; then are our congregations as chief wives, as queens to Jesus Christ. But if our ministers find not conjugal and free acceptance from us; if we be not willing to provide for them comfortable and honourable maintenance; if the word be not so dispensed that the people may find themselves in good or evil estates; if our congregations bring not forth regenerate Chris-

tians to partake of the heavenly inheritance, then are they but as concubines in the sight of God; if we have yet no ministers that woo us, and beseech us to be reconciled to Christ, 2 Cor. v. 20; or if they do, yet we coyly put them off with delays, or refuses, then are we damsels, but neither queens nor concubines. But if we find all the properties of queens belonging unto us, and withal find a love and care to keep ourselves chaste to Christ, and innocent to man, and undefiled, and unspotted, both of the world and of Rome, then are we doves to Christ Jesus, choicest children of the true catholic church.

*Use 2.* A second use is for a discerning of a different estate of all Christian souls, and trial of our own estates before God. If our hearts have never yet been called and knocked at by the lively word of God’s ordinances, or if we have coyly put off our repentance to this day, or refuse to hearken to Christ, then are we damsels. If we bring forth seed of righteousness to Christ, by reason we are under the government of such who will require it, and well may command it of us, we are but as concubines. But if we freely condescend to receive and embrace Christ into our hearts with entire conjugal affection, and give up ourselves to him to bring forth the fruits of his Spirit, and are enabled to govern ourselves and families after his will, then are we royal spouses unto Christ Jesus, and keep ourselves to Christ chaste, innocent, and undefiled, and endeavour to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1; then are we as doves unto Jesus Christ.

*Use 3.* A third use, to direct and instruct ministers and people how to approve themselves and their congregations in best sort unto Christ. Let not ministers thrust themselves upon their people against their consents, but let their people freely accept them, and comfortably maintain them; let the ministers be faithful in dispensing God’s ordinances, and the people obedient to give up themselves to Christ and his truth, till both grow up to heavenly and holy purity of worship and life; so shall our congregations be as queens and doves to Jesus Christ.

*Use 4.* A fourth use may be to encourage men to ways of spotless innocency; they are not disgraceful,

but blessed of the faithful, and praised even of them that are without.

*Use 5.* Fifthly, To reprove the children of the separation, who reproach the church instead of blessing or praising them.

*Use 6.* Sixthly, This may teach us to expect a powerful and glorious calling of the Jews in all the particulars before described: say, They be now, as Gideon's fleece, dry; when the Gentiles are moistened with heavenly dew, they shall again be moistened when we shall seem dry in comparison of them. Though Leah step first into Jacob's bed, and so the less comely church of the Gentiles into the fellowship with Christ, yet the church of the Jews, as beautiful as Rachel, shall in the end find fellowship with Christ.

The glory of their calling appears in the text, because the Holy Ghost describes her by comparisons, not fetched from earthly flowers, or metals, or jewels, but from heavenly lights, the morning, moon, sun.

It appeareth further in their unexpected and free readiness to embrace Christ.

The power of their calling appears in their earnestness and zeal of their ministry, in breaking the hard shell of their hearts wherewith they were formerly enclosed, ver. 11; in stirring them up to fight manfully and terribly God's battles against the enemies of the church, ver. 13.

The Lord speedily hasten the coming of this Shulamite, that we may behold her! Amen.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE TEXT.

*Ver. 1.* *How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.*

*Ver. 2.* *Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.*

*Ver. 3.* *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.*

*Ver. 4.* *Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes are like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-*

*rabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.*

*Ver. 5.* *Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.*

*Ver. 6.* *How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!*

*Ver. 7.* *This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.*

*Ver. 8.* *I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples;*

*Ver. 9.* *And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.*

*Ver. 10.* *I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.*

*Ver. 11.* *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.*

*Ver. 12.* *Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.*

*Ver. 13.* *The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.*

### THE EXPLANATION.

This chapter, to the end of the fourth verse of the eighth chapter, describeth a fourfold estate of the Jewish church. When they shall come to be converted unto the Lord; to wit,

First, As it shall be in gathering and growing up, ver. 1, 5.

Secondly, As it shall be grown up to her stature and maturity, ver. 6, 7.

Thirdly, As it shall be further enlarged by the access of the Gentiles, ver. 8, 10.

Fourthly, As it shall multiply and stretch itself into the country villages, and throughout the land of Israel, ver. 11; ver. 4 of chap. viii.

That in ver. 11 the church inviteth Christ, and with him herself, to have recourse into the country villages, is plain in the words of the former verses, which set forth a threefold estate of the Shulamite converted, is evident by the repetition of the verses,

ver. 3, 7, 8, and all with some difference; and the breasts are so described, ver. 3, and set forth an unsettled ministry, quickly stirring up and down to gather this church and the scattered members of it.

This church then in gathering is described by ten parts; feet, joints of thighs, navel, belly, breasts, neck, eyes, nose, head, hair.

‘How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman,’ ver. 1.

‘How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter!’ In her feet shod with shoes there is a threefold beauty; for it implieth,

First, Her return out of captivity; as, on the contrary, bare feet is a sign of going into captivity, Isa. xx. 1-4; Deut. xxv. 9.

Secondly, Her challenging and recovery of her lost inheritance in Israel, Ruth iv. 7, 8.

Thirdly, Her walking in that peace of conscience which the gospel prepareth, Eph. vi. 15; whereas he that walketh barefoot either gathereth a thick brawny skin upon the soles of his feet; or if his feet be more tender, he pricketh them ever and anon with thorns, or little sharp stones, as scruples. A conscience not furnished with true peace, either waxeth senseless and brawny, or else scrupulous and anxious. All the three things are beautiful and glorious; as, on the contrary, it is a great disturbance and deformity to go into captivity, to sell and forego a man’s inheritance, to walk unquietly and uncomfortably. And if it be beautiful and glorious to return out of bodily captivity, and to recover the earthly inheritance, how much more is it together with these outward things to join a return out of spiritual captivity, and recovery of an everlasting inheritance, as the Jews shall do at their conversion!

‘O prince’s daughter!’ So called,

First, Because they are born of God, the Prince of princes.

Secondly, The Jews converted shall be of much glory and authority, even as the kings of the earth, Rev. xvi. 12.

‘The joints of thy thighs,’ &c. The word signifies whole bones of the thighs; they, for their apt and ready turning in their conversion to God, are like well-wrought precious jewels, the work of the hand

of God, the spiritual workman of all the works of the church.

‘Thy navel,’ &c.; ‘thy belly is like,’ &c. The navel and belly are both hidden parts, not conspicuous to them without, and therefore set forth the two mysteries or sacraments of the church, baptism and the Lord’s supper. The navel, serving for the nourishing of the infant in the womb, resembleth baptism, nourishing infants, and new-born babes in the womb of the church.

It wanteth not liquor,

First, Of the Spirit of Christ to sanctify and cleanse us from sin.

‘The belly,’ to wit, the Lord’s supper, ‘is as an heap of wheat,’ for store of excellent, and sweet, and fine nourishment, ‘set about with lilies;’ because only the faithful, pure Christians shall be admitted to partake in that sacrament.

The Lord’s table shall not be set about with weeds, profane and scandalous sinners, but with lilies, worthy communicants.

‘Thy two breasts (the teachers of that church) are like two young roes.’ For their agility, skipping up and down to suckle the converts, implying that the first ministry of the Jews, at the conversion of that people, shall rather be as the evangelists, bound to no certain place, than as pastors fixed to any settled congregation, which yet outwardly they shall be.

‘That are twins.’

First, For their likeness in disposition.

Secondly, Brotherly equality.

‘Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim; thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus,’ ver. 4.

‘Thy neck is as a tower of ivory.’ The neck, as above, chap. iv. 4, is the faith of the church, joining Christ and his church together, as the neck doth the head and body.

As a tower, for strength; of ivory, for preciousness, for which faith is commended, 1 Pet. i. 7; 2 Pet. i. 1.

‘Thine eyes are like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim.’ For the abundance of water, meaning teachers, that they shall yield, even tears of repentance, at their conversion, partly for the great wrong they had done our Saviour, partly

to consider the unspeakable and undeserved kindness of God towards them, Zech. xii. 10; Jer. iii. 8, 9, and l. 4.

‘Thy nose is like the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus.’ There was a double house of the forest of Lebanon, the one in Jerusalem, built by Solomon, so called by way of resemblance, in which he put his golden shields, whence Shishak taking them, is said to take them out of Jerusalem, 1 Kings vii. 2, x. 17, and xiv. 25, 26 : of this house speaketh Isaiah, chap. xxii. 8.

There was another house built in the forest of Lebanon, as appeareth by this place, which is said to look toward Damascus, to distinguish it from the other which is in Jerusalem.

Lebanon itself stood in the utmost confines of Israel, northwards towards Syria; and therefore this house built in Lebanon is said to look toward Damascus, the chief city of Syria. Now Lebanon being full of all manner of sweet and fragrant trees, and shrubs, and spices, the tower built in Lebanon must needs be compassed with the sweet-smelling odours, to the great refreshing and delight of such as should lodge in it.

Hence the nose of this pure church is compared to this tower, because they that dwell in this church shall be wonderfully refreshed with the sweet odours of the ministry, 2 Cor. ii. 15, which is the sweet savour of life unto life; as also with the savoury conference of good Christians, and their faithful and godly conversation.

‘Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries,’ ver. 5.

‘Thine head upon thee is like Carmel.’ Carmel excelled for fruit, and fulness in feeding cattle, and therefore is reckoned, with Lebanon, and Sharon, and Bashan, famous for fertility, Isa. iii. 39, and xxxv. 2; 1 Sam. xv. 17.

The head of the church under Christ is the civil magistrate. The meaning then is, that the magistrate of this church shall yield store of sound and sweet nourishment to the people, by giving and maintaining free passage to each holy ordinance of God, and also by wholesome laws; and, lastly, by good example of godly life.

‘The hair of thy head like purple.’ The hair,

whether it be the common Christian’s of the church that hang upon Christ, or the officers or servants that hang upon the magistrates of that church, they are like purple.

First, Not only dyed in crimson blood of Christ, Isa. xxxiii. 24, and lxiii. 1;

Secondly, But also of a royal hue, as purple is a princely dye; all of them as princes, chap. vii. 1; Zech. xii. 8; Rev. xvi. 12; Isa. lx. 17, 18.

The officers and exacters shall be peace and righteousness.

These officers shall not basely shark for bribes, nor exact for fees, nor oppress for filthy lucre, nor pick holes in men’s estates to trouble the people and enrich themselves; but, like purple-clothed princes, be like their ministers, and honour both their ministers and themselves with peace and righteousness.

‘The king is held in the rafters,’ chap. i. 17. For so the word is turned before, where the rafters were understood partly of the temple. *Held* is always, to my remembrance, used for holding by constraint, bound as a prisoner. The meaning may be, then, that the king or chief magistrate is bound to be present at the ordinances of God in the temple. The prince is commanded to go in with them; when they go out, he shall go out with them together, Ezek. xlvi. 10, he shall come in with the first and go out with the last. Or what if it imply that their greatest magistrates shall submit themselves to be bound with the censures of the church, according to that where the psalmist telleth of binding of kings with the ordinances of God in the church, Ps. cxlix. 6, 8, and ix. 5. And Isaiah foretelleth that kings and queens shall bow down their faces towards the earth unto the church, and lick the dust of their feet, Isa. xlix. 21. Both their interpretations stand well together.

*Use 1.* First, This doth shew us how to come and appear beautiful in the eyes of the Lord Jesus, which is when we turn our feet from the estate and ways and bondage of sin and Satan, and come out of the captivity into the liberty of his children, when we claim our inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, seeking after it above all earthly blessings, and walking towards it; when we walk confidently in a Christian course, then Christ admireth our beauty. How beautiful are thy goings with shoes, O prince’s daughter! Yea, Christ then esteemeth us as princes’

children: what matter then if foolish men account us peasants, and our going with shoes as strait in the instep? But we stand not nor fall not to their judgments, but to his who shall judge us to eternal happiness or misery at the last day, Mat. v. 18. His word must stand when heaven and earth shall fall. If he account us vessels of honour, we are so indeed; who is it that dishonoureth us? 2 Tim. ii. 21. If men should cast a vessel of gold or silver into the mire and trample upon it, yet the vessel is still a vessel of honour, good, and rich, and precious; the mire may easily be washed off from such vessels. Be not discouraged, then, from Christian courses, by foolish fears of reproach. The truth is, if we go on in sin, Christ esteemeth of us as base peasants, as ugly and abominable in his sight; naked, bare, deformed, and defiled; yea, he esteemeth our goings as going barefoot, which either, first, brawneeth our feet with a thick skin, that thereby we grow insensible and feel nothing; or, secondly, pricketh us with unnecessary scruples and fears.

*Use 2.* Secondly, We may from hence observe to whom the praise of the conversion of the forwardest Christians is due; to wit, to the hands of a cunning workman, the God of power and peace. We might be also called as often to return as the Shulamite in the last verse of the former chapter; and yet, unless this cunning workman put the bones of our thighs into joint, we shall not return to him.

*Use 3.* Further, See here the use of baptism, even to infants. The Anabaptists object that infants can receive no benefit by it, because they yet receive no understanding, no benefit by the word; as if infants cannot receive nourishment by the navel, though they can neither take, nor chew, nor suck meat with hand or mouth. Baptism is the navel by which infants are nourished in the church.

*Use 4.* Fourthly, From this navel never wanting liquor; observe, there doth never want just matter of instruction and comfort to be fetched from our baptism against all temptations. Doth Satan detain thee from obeying thine effectual calling? Remember in baptism from thine infancy thou wast admitted into the family of Christ. Doth he trouble thee with fears and doubts that thy sins are not pardoned? Behold thy baptism is full of liquor of Christ's blood to justify thee from all thy sins.

Doth Satan tempt thee to defile thyself with any sin? Behold thou art washed solemnly in baptism from all sin, and wilt thou defile thyself against thy baptism?

*Use 5.* Fifthly, In the Lord's supper see what plenty of excellent, sound, and sweet nourishment is offered to us, even a heap of wheat. Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, John vi. 55. There is all-sufficient nourishment for a hungry soul; this serveth to quicken our appetite to this heavenly banquet.

*Use 6.* Sixthly, Observe what manner of persons should be admitted to the Lord's table, and how we should prepare ourselves thereto. This heap of wheat is not to be set about with stinking weeds, but with fair lilies. Cleanse ourselves then from all scandalous sins, yea, and from all secret sins, to our best endeavours, so shall we be set about this heap of wheat, the Lord's table.

Seventhly, Note that ministers, to be like roes, skipping up and down to gather and suckle the children of the church, is fitter for a church in gathering than convenient in a church constituted; for then the breasts hang in their place like clusters of grapes upon the branches of the vine, ver. 7, 8. But they must be breasts giving suck, not dry nurses; that is their duty in every estate of the church. Or, if their people be grown up in Christ to fitness for strong meat, then they to be full in a stronger liquor than milk, as clusters of grapes, full of wines.

Eighthly, See the beauty and commendation of three cardinal graces:

First, Faith, to be,

First, Strong.

Secondly, Precious; applying the precious promises, and making us rich with them.

Secondly, Repentance, to abound in brokenness of spirit through godly sorrow, melting into abundance of tears, or other affections suitable thereto.

Thirdly, Obedience, to be,

First, Fragrant.

Secondly, And that with all manner of sweet fruits and good, that all that converse with us may smell a sweet savour from our conversation.

*Use 9.* Ninthly, Mark here a lesson for magistrates to be as Carmel, yielding some sweet and plentiful nourishment to the people.

First, By procuring free passage to God's ordinances, whence Jehoshaphat's nobles are said to teach, 2 Chron. i. 7, and vii. 9.

Secondly, By making wholesome laws.

Thirdly, By giving good example of life, to have no officers hanging about them of base demeanour, exacters, promoters, contentious persons, but such as may execute it themselves and their ministers. And for public ordinances of God's worship, it is no disparagement to magistrates to behave themselves reverently in them, and to submit themselves unto them as unto Christ.

Use 10. Tenthly, From this complete description of the beauty of the church in all her parts, observe,

First, That the church was never so completely beautiful in all her parts as it shall be when the Jews are called. The apostolic primitive church, though all fair, yet wanted this head-like Carmel, a Christian magistrate, yea, and some purity of the sacrament, 1 Cor. xi. 20.

Secondly, In that he beginneth this description from the feet, and so ascendeth to the head in order. It may seem the calling of the Jews shall begin at first rather with some of the lowest people, and so ascend higher and higher to more eminent persons.

Thirdly, In that the church neither here, where so many of her members are set forth, nor in all this song, is described by the beauty of her hands or fingers, we must not gather that therefore this church will be barren of good works. God forbid; but rather conceive Christ concealeth the mention of her hands, to wit, her works, partly,

First, Because the harlot of Rome so delighteth so much to boast of her hands, of her works, which indeed she wants. Christ had rather his church should abound in good works in silence than boast of them, especially when they are wanting.

Secondly, Because it is he alone, and not we, that worketh all our works for us, Isa. xxvi. 12; Hosea xiv. 8; John xv. 5.

'How fair,' &c., chap. vii. 6, and viii. 4.

In these verses the Holy Ghost goes on to describe the second estate of the Jews' church, as is spoken above, chap. vii. 1, in ver. 6, 7, as grown up to her full stature and maturity.

For, first, Beauty is not observed till full growth; now here her beauty is admired, ver. 6.

Secondly, Her stature is expressly mentioned to be a palm-tree, ver. 7.

Thirdly, Her breasts are here mentioned again, ver. 7, to shew that he speaketh not of the same estate of the church as afore. Besides, the breasts yielding wine instead of milk, it is a sign the church shall then be grown to more maturity and fitness to be fed with stronger meat.

The church of the Jews, then come to her fuller growth, is here described:—

First, By her beauty, which is admirable: 'How fair!' and joined with pleasure: 'How pleasant art thou!' especially for public worship so described, ver. 6.

Secondly, By her stature, resembled to a palm-tree, ver. 7.

Thirdly, Her breasts resembled to clusters of grapes, ver. 7.

The third estate of this church, as it shall be further enlarged by the access of the Gentiles, is described, ver. 8, 10; and that,

First, By Christ's climbing this palm-tree, and taking hold of the boughs of it, ver. 8.

Secondly, By the rich supply of nourishment from her breasts, ver. 8.

Thirdly, By the smell of her nose, resembled to apples, ver. 8.

Fourthly, By the power of her doctrine, ver. 9.

Fifthly, By her familiar fellowship with Christ, ver. 10.

The fourth estate of this church, as it shall multiply and stretch itself into the country villages, is described, ver. 11, to the fourth of the next chapter, and that,

First, By the occasion of this increase, the church's invitement of Christ to visit the country villages, ver. 11, 12.

Secondly, By the affectionate service of this church to Christ, chap. viii. 1, 2.

Thirdly, By Christ's affectionate embracing of her, ver. 3.

Fourthly, By the church's desire for the continuance of this estate without interruption, ver. 4.

'How fair, and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!'

'How fair!' The fairness and beauty of the church implieth suitably to what is found in the natural beauty of the body.



First, A complete integrity of all the members of this church; where any member is wanting, there is deformity, beauty is blemished. This church shall want then no ordinances of God, nor any such members to whom the dispensation of each ordinance belongeth.

Secondly, A fit proportion of all the members of the church one to another; no swellings, no convulsions.

Thirdly, A good colour in the outward face of things, all carried decently and in order. 'How fair!' It implieth admirable beauty in all these respects.

'How pleasant for delights!' This word implieth a ready willingness of this church to the public worship of God, which is here called delights, as being the marriage-bed wherein Christ most familiarly solaceth himself with his church.

This ready willingness of this church was foretold, Ps. cx. 3; and the willingness of this people to any service of his is pleasant to him, 2 Cor. ix. 7.

'O love!' As if the church were so lovely that it were even love itself.

The five former verses described the church in her several members apart. This verse considereth the whole body met together in public duties.

'This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes,' ver. 7.

'This thy stature is like to a palm-tree.' This tree is eminent,

First, For her straightness.

Secondly, For her tallness.

Thirdly, For her perpetual greenness and fruitfulness, Jer. xvii. 8, as that,

Fourthly, For her thriving under weight pressing it down.

Fifthly, For her easiness to be climbed, having many boughs whereon to stay hands and feet. So shall the church be eminent for uprightness therein, for growing up even against all oppositions of Gog and Magog, for ready entertaining of all the faithful that shall come to her.<sup>1</sup>

'Thy breasts are like the clusters of the vine-grapes.' Their ministers such like in four respects:

First, Not few, as afore, two young roes, but many, as clusters.

Secondly, Not stirring up and down, as roes, from place to place, but hanging in their places.

Thirdly, Full of strong liquor of sound doctrine.

Fourthly, Requiring some pressure in urging, though little, before they empty themselves, but upon easy pressure doing it plentifully.

'I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples,' ver. 8.

'I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof.' Christ speaks of himself, to imply the readiness of his members to resort and flock to this church of the Jews; for what Christ's members do by the guidance of his Spirit, he accounteth it his own action. This forwardness of the Gentiles to ascend and resort to Jerusalem is elsewhere foretold more plainly, Zech. viii. 23; Isa. lx. 8-11.

'Now also thy breasts as the clusters of the vine.' And that is, notwithstanding the plenteous access of the Gentiles to the church, there shall be no defect of ministers to teach and feed them all; but there shall be still a large supply of store, sweet and plentiful teachers, as clusters of grapes to refresh them all.

'And the smell of thy nose like apples.' Notwithstanding this plenteous access of the Gentiles, the life of common Christians untainted with heathenish and popish unsavoury pollutions, yet the church herself, and they that live in it, shall smell a fragrant savour of the good conversation of the people.

'The smell of thy nose.' Not which the nose yieldeth, but which is yielded to the nose, to thy savoury discerning shall be sweet and comfortable, as that of apples.

Before, when this church consisted of her own people, her smell was as that of Lebanon, ver. 4; and now, by the access of the Gentiles, it shall not be corrupt. Indeed, when the Israelites came out of Egypt, the mingled of the Gentiles with them drew them away to murmuring and lusting; for this compare Exod. xii. 38 with Num. xi. 4. But no such contagion shall accrue to this church by the mingling of the Gentiles with them.

'And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine

<sup>1</sup> Plin., lib. xiii. cap. 4.

for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.' ver. 9.

'And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine.' Heb., Like good wine going to my beloved most straightly and rightly. That is, the doctrine of the church shall be as ever any most sweet, and powerful, and comfortable, and generous wine; it shall ever go or tend directly to Christ, always aiming at the preaching of him.

To go rightly or straightly implied the strength and generousness of wine when it sparkleth upward in the cup, as Prov. xxiii. 31, which here expresseth the lively vigour of the church's doctrine in her preaching of Christ, 'causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.' Such shall be the sweet and powerful efficacy of the doctrine of the church then, as shall cause the sleepy and drowsy professors, whether amongst us Gentiles or amongst the Jews, to open their mouths and speak plentifully to God's praise. When the apostles spake the wonderful works of God in strange tongues, some of the people thought them to be full of new wine; but they were deceived, and were willing so to account of them in mockery, Acts ii. 11-13. But these people shall be full of new wine of the Spirit and word of God, to open their mouths to speak, as the apostles did, the wonderful works of God.

'I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me,' ver. 10.

This profession of the church, that she is her beloved's, argueth,

First, Her familiar fellowship with Christ.

Secondly, Her faith or confidence of her interest in him, or his in her.

Thirdly, Her open profession of the same.

That his desire is towards her argueth the strength of his affection toward her, and it is the same word used, Gen. iii. 16, and iv. 7, which there implieth two things:

First, The strength of their affection to their husband and their elder brother.

Secondly, The subordination and dependence thereof upon their will. The former is here also meant; the latter doth not stand with the sovereignty and headship of Christ over his church, Eph. v. 23, 24, unless thus far, to intimate Christ's tender regard of the will and desire of his church,

as he would be as unwilling to deny them as loving husbands be to deny their wives anything.

'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages,' ver. 11.

In these words the church inviteth Christ to visit the country villages about her, implying,

First, Her prayers to Christ that with her he might lodge there, plant and set churches there.

Secondly, Her care to take and observe all opportunities to advance such a work.

'Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves,' ver. 12.

'Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish.' Meaning, if any opportunity should offer itself to plant religion amongst them, then Christ and she might be forward to further the same.

Thirdly, Her promise to Christ to employ her best endeavours to such a service.

'There will I give thee my loves.' The love of the church to Christ is especially seen in feeding his lambs and sheep, John xxi. 15. She therefore offereth to Christ free use of her dearest and best affections to set forward such a work.

Fourthly, Her discerning of some good beginning of such a work.

'The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved,' ver. 13.

'The mandrakes give a smell;' which is a country field herb, Gen. xxx. 14, yet amiable; which argueth some fruits to be gathered in the country.

'And at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old.' And therefore, out of the abundance of her own store, she can supply the country with all fit helps to her further gathering and establishment.

'Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.' She professeth her desire to employ all her store to Christ's advantage, and therefore abounding with ministers and other fit officers for gathering and establishing the country churches about her, she expresseth her readiness to bring them out to his service and use, as if they were some good household provision laid up by her for such a use. The access

of the whole land of Israel to the city is profitable. The land shall be called Beulah, Isa. lxii. 4, as well as the city Hephzibah, ver. 10. A causeway is cast up for a mutual recourse of country to city.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE TEXT.

Ver. 1. *Oh that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.*

Ver. 2. *I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.*

Ver. 3. *His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.*

Ver. 4. *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.*

Ver. 5. *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple-tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.*

Ver. 6. *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.*

Ver. 7. *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.*

Ver. 8. *We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?*

Ver. 9. *If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.*

Ver. 10. *I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.*

Ver. 11. *Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.*

Ver. 12. *My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.*

Ver. 13. *Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.*

Ver. 14. *Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*

### THE EXPLANATION.

The church of the Jews, both in city and country thus gathered, do here express her ardent affection to Christ, and due respect of him, which the old synagogue shewed towards her<sup>1</sup> whilst he was conversant amongst them in the flesh. Since, saith she, 'O that thou wert as my brother,' &c. Christ was made our brother by taking our nature upon him at his incarnation, and then he sucked the breasts of the church, attending to the ministry of John and other Jewish teachers: she therefore, to shew her affection, desireth that he were now amongst them, conversant in their streets again in bodily presence, she would not do then as the old synagogue did, be ashamed of him, or come to him by night; but she would kiss him, and embrace him in the open streets, and yet no man should then despise her for her so doing, as they did, John iv. 48, 49; but every one should encourage her in her obsequiousness to him. She would not reject him, and thrust him out of the synagogue, as her old ancestors had done, Luke iv. 28, 29; but if she found him without, she would lead him, and invite him into their synagogue, or temple, there to instruct her, and teach her the will of her Father. She would not give him gall to eat, and vinegar to drink, as her forefathers had done, Mat. xxvii. 34; but she would cause him to drink of the best delicate spiced wine, and the juice of her pomegranate.

'His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me,' ver. 3.

The left hand of Christ is the Christian magistrate, which shall in those days support and advance the church, and hold up her head.

His right hand is the faithful ministers, which shall speak comfortable things to her heart, and so embrace her, Isa. lxii.; Ezek. xxxiii. 23-25; Dan. vii. 27; for this also see chap. ii. 6. 'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.'

The church, enjoying these great mercies and

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'Shewed not towards him?'

blessings from Christ, chargeth all her daughters, members, to walk so thankfully and fruitfully towards God, and lovingly and helpfully one towards another, and so circumspectly and inoffensively to them which are without, that no occasion be given of their alteration of their happy estate. When the church gave this charge before, it was in regard of the roes and hinds of the field, chap. ii. 7, and iii. 5; fearful Christians coming on towards religion, willing to flock, and feed, and converse with the sheep, yet ready to start and flee away upon any fear of danger of persecution; but now no regard is had of these fearful ones; for they that shall then remain fearful, when the church shall enjoy so great light and safety, they shall be quite excluded from conversing with the church. Isa. lxxv. 25.

For use we may here learn,

*Use 1.* First, Since the church of the Jews shall attain to so great beauty, it ought to kindle our desire to pray earnestly for their conversion, that we may behold the admirable fairness thereof, and be delighted with her consolations, Isa. lxxvi. 11, 12.

*Use 2.* Secondly, This doth teach us how to approve ourselves pleasant and fair in Christ's eyes, even by keeping his ordinances in integrity and simplicity, and by a willing readiness to frequent the same.

Christ may see all the world, as he did when Satan shewed it to him, Mat. iv. 8, 9; Luke iv. 5, 6, and yet not admire it; yea, condemn it for vanity, as it is, Eccles. i. 2, 14, and ii. 11, 15, 17, 19, 22, 26; but a well-ordered church, and ready, he admireth.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, Here learn the more straight and sincere, the more patient and meek, the more faithful, the more fruitful in all holy obedience, &c., the more do we attain to a palm-tree-like full stature of Christianity.

*Use 4.* Fourthly, It may learn and direct ministers to apply themselves to the estate of their people. If they be babes in Christ, to be as breasts of milk to suckle them; if they be grown to ripe years, to be as clusters of grapes to refresh them with stronger liquor, be ready to pour out sweet and comfortable liquor; but see some good calling to pressing you to it, let all your doctrine direct to Christ, and dispense it with such powerful efficacy of the Spirit, that the drowsy sluggard may be raised up to some

fruitfulness, and more holy walking towards God.

*Use 5.* Fifthly, This may teach towns well provided for to lend their best care and help for the edifying and calling home of country villages: grudge not then at their ready resort to the gate of your assemblies, but rather encourage them, that they may be partakers with them.

*Use 6.* Sixthly, This lets us see that time shall come when forward profession shall be no disgrace; yea, men shall kiss Christ openly, and shall not be despised.

*Use 7.* Seventhly, The malignity of our ancestors against Christ and his gospel must provoke us to more embracing of him, and more subjection to him.

*Use 8.* Eighthly, We may here see that a faithful ministry and godly magistracy is a pledge of Christ's tender love, and kind embracing of the church.

*Use 9.* Ninthly, We are hence to take notice, that when a church enjoyeth many gracious and sweet blessings from Christ, it is good for her to see it and acknowledge it, and to be careful that all her members may so walk as their happiness be not interrupted. In the fourth verse the charge runneth thus, 'That ye stir not up,' &c.; but in the Hebrew, 'Why should you stir up,' &c. As who should say, When all things are thoroughly and fully reformed and settled, why should you go about any innovation? This manner of charge was never uttered before, chap. ii. 7, to the end.

'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple-tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.'

'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?' In these words the Holy Ghost setteth out the calling and estate of two other churches after the calling of the Jews:

First, The one arising out of the wilderness, ver. 5, 7.

Secondly, The other a little sister, ver. 8, 10, together with the estate of the whole church, as it shall then stand, from that time to the end of the world, ver. 11, 14.

This church coming up from the wilderness is described,

First, By the unexpectedness of her arising,

together with the admiration of the Jewish churches there, ver. 5. 'Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness?'

Secondly, By the place of her arising, the wilderness.

Thirdly, By her familiar fellowship with Christ, joined with her confidence on him, leaning upon her beloved.

Fourthly, By the means of the gathering and raising of this church: 'I raised thee up under an apple-tree,' &c., ver. 5.

Fifthly, By her earnest desire of his deep affection to her, and continual remembrance of her: 'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm,' ver. 6; which petition of hers is urged by a motive, taken from the strength and depth of her affection to him, which she proveth,

First, By comparing her affection as equal to three things most strong:

First, Death.

Secondly, To the grave.

Thirdly, To vehement flames of fire, ver. 6.

Secondly, By comparing it to two things as less than her affection, though they be also of great force:

First, To many waters, which cannot quench her affection of love.

Secondly, To the whole substance of any man's house, which would be contemned if it were offered to withdraw her from Christ, ver. 7.

The calling and estate of the other church, the little sister, is described by three passages:

First, By the consultation of the elder sisters; to wit, of the Jewish churches, and of that church coming up out of the wilderness, what they shall do for her when she shall be spoken of, ver. 8.

Secondly, By a resolution what they shall do for her, suitable to what her condition, as they shall find her, shall require, ver. 9.

Thirdly, A satisfaction given by this little sister to the elder, how her estate standeth, together with the cause thereof, God's favour, that they may the better know what courses to take for her, ver. 10.

The estate of the whole church, as it shall stand after the conversion of the Jews, and of those other churches, is set forth,

First, From Christ's care for them, expressed,

First, In his watchfulness over them in his own

person, which he amplifies by the less care which Solomon had of his vineyard, committing the keeping of it to others, ver. 11, 12.

Secondly, In his charge to the church, that he may hear her companions hearkening unto her, ver. 13.

Secondly, By the church's prayer unto Christ, that he may hasten the translating of them into heaven in the end of the world, ver. 14.

'Who is this that cometh?' &c. Who these churches should be that remain to be called after the conversion of the Jews and Gentiles, we cannot conceive any more fitly than the churches of Assyria; secondly, Of Egypt, of which we read, Isa. xix. 23, 25. When a church shall be elected among the Jews, signified by Ezekiel's goodly temple, Ezek. xlvi. 1, 9, the water of God's Spirit shall flow from thence eastward, go down into the desert, and from thence spread themselves far and near.

This desert or wilderness, eastward from Judah, is the wilderness of Arabia, whither spiritual graces shall be conveyed by some coming from Jerusalem, and from thence they shall be further carried into the east countries, to the gathering and conversion of the Assyrians and others: whence it is that church arising from the wilderness of Arabia, is said to lean upon her beloved in an Arabian word; as when the Holy Ghost was to speak of the Babylonian captivity, or winter being past, he useth the Babylonian or Chaldean word, chap. ii. 11. So then, when the churches of Judea shall see such a goodly church spring from some small help, out of the wilderness of Arabia, beyond their expectation, they shall say of her, 'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?' trusting by faith on him, and thereby attaining and enjoying fellowship with him; for to lean is put as an act of faith or trusting, Prov. iii. 5, and the gesture implieth familiar love, John xiii. 23, and xxi. 20.

'I raised thee under an apple-tree.' Christ, or the church of the Jews by his power, raised up his church by the means of some inferior magistrate, resembled here by an apple-tree, as before, chap. ii. 3; for though he was not so high and mighty as the cedars of Lebanon, or the oaks of Bashan, yet eminent he was, and his shadow good, and his fruit cordial and comfortable.

And the means of the gathering of this church, being at first but an inferior magistrate, the church had more need and use of faith to lean upon her beloved, when sovereign authority did not countenance the work.

‘There thy mother brought thee forth;’ to wit, the mother-church of the Jews, or the catholic, which is the mother of us all, Gal. iv. 26.

‘Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame,’ ver. 6.

‘Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm.’ That is, let me be deeply engraven as a seal is into thine heart, or affection, and as a seal on thine arm, let me be continually in thy sight and remembrance. And because the heart is the seat of the will, and the arm of strength, therefore she desireth his deep affection and mighty strength and power always to be present with her for her comfort and peace.

‘For love is strong as death.’ Death sheweth his strength,

First, In subduing all sorts of people, high and low, young and old.

Secondly, Accepting no compassion, nor yielding to any opposition, but going through with his work; such strength of love shall this church shew to Christ, subduing all before her to the obedience of Christ, and not suffering any impediment to detain her from him.

‘Jealousy is cruel as the grave.’ Jealousy is a mixed affection of zeal or fervent love, and carries at any co-rivals a rage with wrath against them: so fervent then shall the zealous love of this church be to Christ, that she may not endure any such things as shall steal away the people’s hearts from Christ, or alienate or lessen his affection to her, but as the grave,

First, She shall devour all such things, and bury them out of sight; and,

Secondly, There hold them under for ever.

‘The coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame.’ The ardency of this love shall, as coals of fire,

First, Enflame her in all her services to Christ.

Secondly, Burn up as stubble all impediments.

First, All inward green lusts.

Secondly, Outward entanglements.

‘Vehement flame.’ Heb., Flames of God—that is, excellent or extraordinary; for in Scripture phrase the things of God are transcendently excellent, as the harps of God, Rev. xv. 2, the trees of God, Ps. i. 3.

Flames of God, divine and vehement; and indeed this vehement love, being kindled by God’s heavenly Spirit, cannot be quenched with earthly things.

‘Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned,’ ver. 7.

That is, neither adversities, though never so many, or deep, or strong, as many waters and floods, shall withdraw this love from Christ; nor all the treasures, and pleasures, and credit which the substance of any man’s house might procure us, shall be of any reckoning in comparison of Christ, to withhold our hearts from him.

‘We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?’ ver. 8.

‘We have a little sister,’ &c. The church of Judea and Assyria, hearing of some good people growing up and coming on in Egypt, they are solicitous what course to take for them for their growth and establishment.

‘A little sister.’ In comparison of the Jews or Assyrians, for but five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and one of them shall be called the city of destruction, Isa. xix. 18.

‘And she hath no breasts.’ No ministers to give to them the sincere milk of the word, 1 Pet. ii. 2, or the means of consolation in their oppressions and distresses, Isa. ix. 20.

‘In the day when she shall be spoken for.’ When the fulness of time shall come, that she shall grow up to such a multitude of professors, as may be fit to have a settled church established amongst them; for there is a company grown up to be a fit spouse for Christ, when there are so many good Christians as may constitute a well-ordered church.

‘If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar,’ ver. 9.

‘If she be a wall, we will build.’ That is, if she have a Christian magistracy; for the magistrate is a wall:

First, High, to keep out invasions of enemies; even so doth he keep out foreign evils from breaking in upon his people.

Secondly, Close, to keep in his people within bounds from breaking out into disorder.

Thirdly, Firm, whereon to rear, if occasion be, a silver palace, whereon to lay the frame of a good motion or course to be taken for public good.

Fourthly, A wall of partition, to divide between right and wrong, to give every man his own.

‘We will build upon her a silver palace.’ We will make her garment honourable and wealthy.

‘If she be a door’—that is, if she have faithful ministers, which as a door open the way to Christ, that the people may go in and out, and find pasture in him—‘we will inclose her with boards of cedar.’ Cedar is a timber that will neither rot, nor breed worms, and so will endure always; whence it was that the heathen made their *Simulacra decorum*,<sup>1</sup> images of their gods, of this wood, to make them seem eternal. These sister-churches then promise, that if their little sister of Egypt have any faithful ministers, they will provide for their safety and peace, that they be not discouraged nor disturbed in their function.

‘I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour,’ ver. 10.

The little sister of Egypt resolveth her sisters that she wants neither Christian magistrates nor faithful ministers; so full of wholesome doctrine, as that her breasts swell like towers; which yet she acknowledgeth to be a singular mercy and favour of Christ, and ascribeth all her store to his praise: ‘Then was I as one that found favour in his eyes.’

‘Solomon had a vineyard in Baal-hamon,’ ver. 11. A place so fruitful, that for excellency it was called the Lord of a multitude, or the owner of great increase. He let out the vineyard to keepers, who paid him a great rent, even thousands, for the fruit of it, and yet had a good portion, certain hundreds, for their own pains.

‘My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou,

<sup>1</sup> Plin., lib. xiii. cap. 5.

O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred,’ ver. 12.

To wit, I let not out my vineyard to others, but I kept it myself always; let Solomon take his thousands for his fruits of his vineyard, and the reapers their hundreds, I will not so do, but take all the pains to keep my vineyard, and reap all the gains of the fruits thereof to myself. The meaning is, when Christ hath gathered all these churches of the Jews, Assyrians, Egyptians, and neighbour nations, he will then keep his church with his mighty power, that neither dragons, nor wild boars, nor foxes shall hereafter root it up, or make havoc of it, as in time past they have done. This is expressly foretold, and shall come to pass after the destruction of Leviathan, the great Turk, Isa. xxvii. 1–3.

‘Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it,’ ver. 13.

‘Thou that dwellest in the gardens.’ The participle being of the feminine gender, sheweth that it is the church, not Christ, that is here spoken to, who is said to dwell in the garden; to wit, in the particular churches, as the sea dwelleth in each particular country sea—the German Sea, the Spanish Sea, the Baltic Sea, &c. So the catholic church is divided into particular churches, or the Jewish mother-church dwelleth by her authority and directions in all other churches.

‘The companions hearkening to thy word (or voice) cause me to hear it.’ So the words in the original, which implieth either that church would have the mother-church of the Jews take care of all other Christian churches, and give directions unto them, and yet not as unto her handmaids, but as to her companions; or else, if the words be read according to the translation, ‘The companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it;’ they imply that, after the calling of these churches, this shall be their constant estate to the world’s end, as they shall all,

First, Embrace one another as companions, not claiming Romish supremacy.

Secondly, Harken to the voice and directions of the mother-church in Solomon’s days for wisdom to him.

Thirdly, Continue in calling upon the name of Christ without dissipation and interruption to the end.

'Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountain of spices,' ver. 14.

This is the prayer of all the churches; now that all things are accomplished, the which prophets and apostles have foretold, that Christ would hasten his last coming as swiftly and quickly as the swiftest of the creatures, the roe, or young hart, to take them up with himself into the highest heavens of the mountains of spices, where are all manner of spices, where are all manner of sweet and fragrant and pleasant things, even fulness of joy at God's right hand for evermore, Ps. xvi. 11. Thus in the end of the Revelation: 'The Spirit and the bride,' and every faithful soul saith in like sense, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,' Rev. xxii. 17, 20.

*Use 1.* The use of this is, first, To teach us that the nations of the Gentiles shall not be cast off from the fellowship of the church when the Jews are called, as the Jews were cast out of the church that the Gentiles might be grafted in, Rom. xi. 19, 20; but even after their calling, new churches of the Gentiles shall be brought in; yea, their conversion shall bring life from the dead into the world: 'What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?' Rom. xi. 12, 15; yea, the Gentiles shall bring their glory to it, Rev. xxi. 24; yea, the cursed Canaanite shall not be excluded from partaking in this blessing, Ezek. xvi. 55, 60, 61. How much more may we hope then that these churches of Christendom, which have suffered so much with Christ, and for him, under the dragon, the beast, and the Turk, shall partake with the glory of these churches of the Jews when the time shall come?

*Use 2.* Secondly, This doth teach us how to attain fellowship and holy familiarity with Christ, even by faith, leaning upon him as our beloved; infidelity and doubting hinder our sweet communion with Christ, labour we therefore to abandon it from us.

*Use 3.* Thirdly, We may here see the duty of inferior magistrates what it is, even to see that the church be raised up under them, how much more to countenance and protect it with their shadow, and to comfort it with the fruit of their sweet and wholesome laws and examples!

*Use 4.* Fourthly, This may serve for trial of the goodness of our affections to Christ; if we thirst

after his deep affection to us, and continual remembrance of us, if we labour to subdue ourselves and all ours to him, if we jealously war against all that which might impair our love to him, if we burn up all our impediments, if no afflictions can discourage us from him, if no prosperity can shake our entire desires after him, we are then well affected to him as this church is. If we desire to have such deep place in Christ's heart, it is a plain sign Christ hath a deep place in our hearts.

*Use 5.* Fifthly, This may shew us a means how to consume all base and kitchen loves and lusts in us, set upon these sensual worldly things; grow up in this spiritual love to Christ, and it will swallow up and consume these lesser fires; the greater light will extinguish the lesser, as the sun will put out the kitchen fire; so this strong fire of Christ's love in us will burn up, and eat out all lust in us.

*Use 6.* Sixthly, This may comfort the true church and children of God, in assurance of their perseverance. If our love to him be so unchangeable, that many waters of afflictions cannot quench it, nor floods of temptations drown it; if it be so strong as death, that it will devour all before it, how much more is his love to us!

*Use 7.* Seventhly, This lets us see that the churches that are well-established themselves must not contemn their weak neighbour churches, but take care, and use all good means for their establishment and growth. How far should greater churches be from cutting off the breasts, or breaking down the walls of their small neighbour churches!

*Use 8.* Eighthly, This may teach magistrates to be as walls to keep out all disorder. Stand up as a wall if there come in disorders; stand so high that they cannot come over. If any would go a-begging, keep them in; restrain beggary, idleness, drunkenness, whoredom, and profaneness, all evil courses; be as a wall, whereon to rear a silver palace for ever; whereon to lay the frame of a good motion, course, or order, to be taken for the public good; any good motion made, or to be made, is as a wall to divide equally to all men their right.

*Use 9.* Ninthly, This may teach ministers to be as doors to open a wide entrance for the people to come to Christ; not as those scribes and pharisees which Christ complains of, Luke xii. 52, which



neither enter in themselves, nor would suffer others: such are rather porteullises, yea. gates of hell.

*Use 10.* Tenthly, This may let us see the duty of magistrates. If ministers be doors, it should be their care to hem them in with boards of cedar, to provide for their security; it is the duty of every magistrate and member to hem them in, that no enemy may be able to oppose them, but that they may be without fear among them; as it is, 1 Cor. xvi. 10, 'see that Timothy be without fear among you.'

*Use 11.* Eleventhly, This may let us see, a church enjoying a faithful ministry and a Christian magistracy, enjoyeth a special favour from Christ.

*Use 12.* Twelfthly, This lets us see what great care Christ will one day have of his church, though lions, dragons, and bears have broken in upon the church to devour it; and besides, many foxes have sought to subvert it, and to cut the sinews of it asunder, yet when Christ shall take the government of it into his hands, there shall be no enemy to offer violence to it; when the great leviathan shall be punished, even leviathan that crooked serpent, and the dragon that is in the sea shall be slain: 'In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of new wine,' Isa. xxvii. 1, 2; yea, the Lord will keep it, he will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, he

will keep it night and day; yea, Christ will one day free his church from all oppression, and give free passage to all his ordinances.

*Use 13.* Finally, This serves to teach us all what affection we should have to the coming of Christ to judgment; to desire him to be as the 'roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices;' to take us up into the highest heavens, where are all manner of sweet and fragrant and pleasant things, even fulness of joy for evermore, Ps. xvi. 11; 2 Tim. iv. 8.

The faithful spouses of Christ do earnestly desire his coming to judgment, but harlots would put off his coming. A chaste wife and a loyal spouse desires her husband to send no more letters, but to hasten his return, and come home; but a harlot would have her husband's coming deferred; so they whose hearts are a-whoring after the world, neither desire Christ's coming, nor love his appearing. That we may therefore shew and approve ourselves to be the true spouses of Christ, desire his hasty coming, and say, as Rev. xxii. 20, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.' The Lord work this good work and frame of grace in our hearts, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen. 'Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!' Num. xxiv. 23.











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